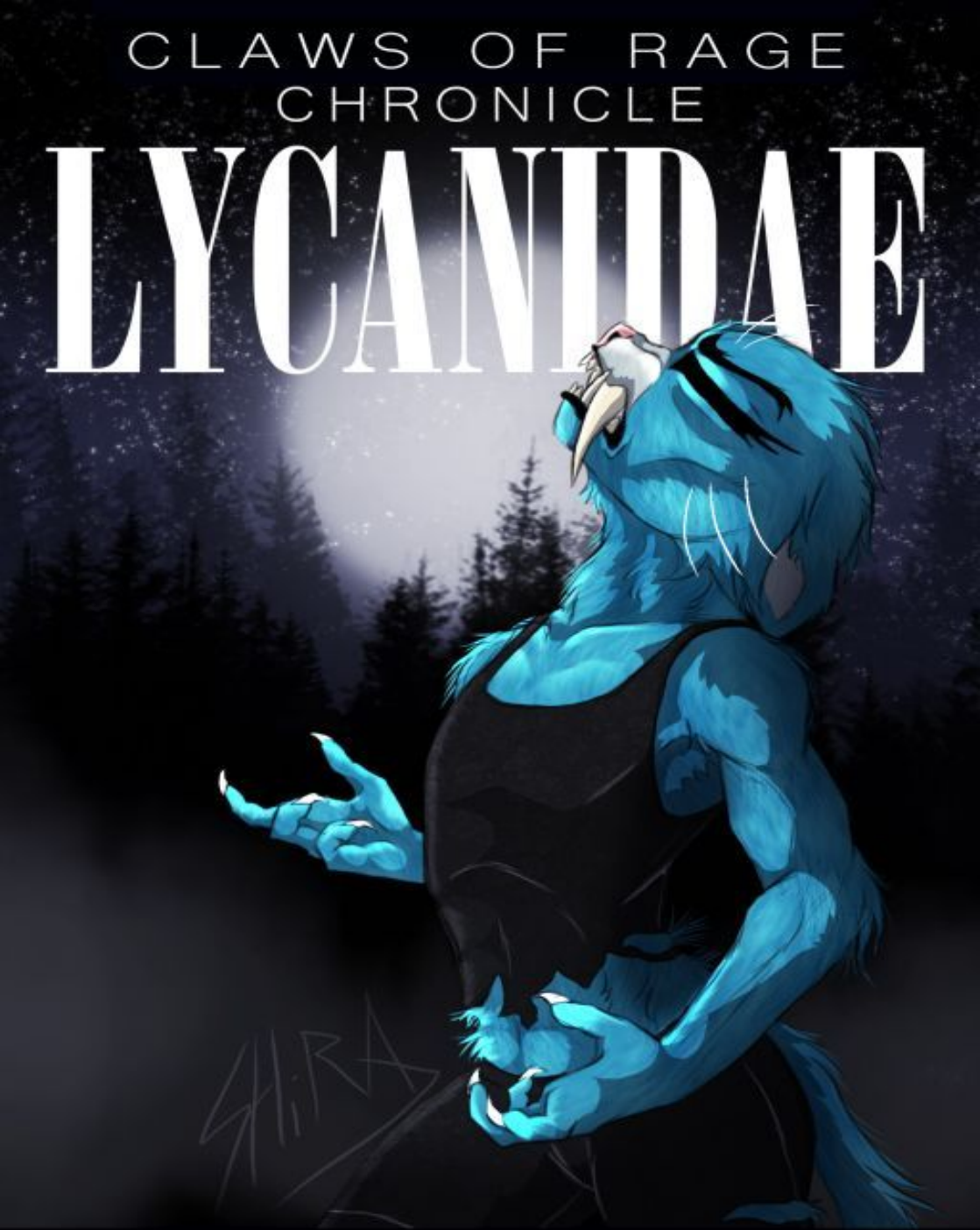
CLAWS OF RAGE
CHRONICLE

LYCANIDAE



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TAWOG FANFIC STORY

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Lycanidae [CoR chronicle]

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Chapter 1

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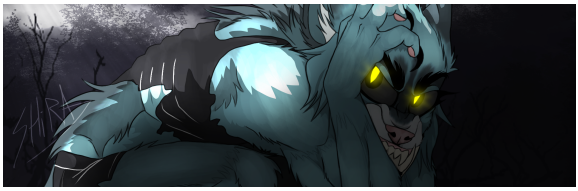


The sound of shattering glass. The not so long-ago cleaned bathroom turned from neutral into a stressful ambient as soon as the mirror cracked. Surroundings received an imaginary red filter on top and cold silence intensified in the fake marble room that was darkened by the switched off lights. Nicole stared at her with blood-stained fist. She would've assumed the blood only ended up there because of how she just threw a punch at full power into her reflection, but knew her paw had been reddened before. Not all the blood was her own. Besides the tiny shards of glass that accompanied the surface of her skin, there were multiple and seemingly infinite blood cells that weren't hers. She clearly remembers having thrown a punch

before, straight into the face of the very patient she least expected to ever hit. She does not remember why or how she got to that point. Such a low point she only would've expected on herself months ago. She thought she grew over it. But there was still too much going on. Her fuse was frustratingly short this day, especially compared to other days. Those other days were fine, with lots of improvement shown on her end. She even felt the necessary reassurance and pride the day before, what she hadn't felt in what seems like ages. But now she has reached the start again. The lowest point next to the hill she just fell down from, that fall being the very consequence of hitting that poor lady. No one had checked up on the blue feline yet, nor did she find the strength to show herself either. Once she saw blood, a lot of blood, running down Shalon's face she took a sprint to the nearest bathroom. It reminds her of an early breakdown from years ago... *Don't let the past dwell on you anymore, I made a promise...* She shook her head while snapping herself out of her thoughts again. Daring to take one more look into the mirror, despite hating her reflection thoroughly, barely anything of her could be recognized. Not the dark and edgy type of not recognizing - she grew out of that a while ago after having found a bit of peace with her entity - but rather the literal type of not being able to see anything recognizable due to the fractured glass. It all felt like a typical scene

from a movie that had a mental hospital in it. Oh wait, that's literally where she was.

The day before was the last time when Nicole won her little competition against her alarm clock, having made attempts at getting up before it went off. Many successful days in a row formed a streak of a healthy cycle the blue feline was grateful to have built up. It's been a few months since she was able to leave the hospital on her own, having needed a lot of time to physically patch up. Now her mental journey was what remained, but she never felt any more prepared and patient to follow that path another time.

It's Thursday! Gosh, I used to be excited about it due to it being the day before weekend, but since I spent months here instead it turned into waffle day. It's honestly adorable how the guiders and nurses try their ultimate best to organize little activities that are fun for everyone here. Although... I've personally kind of distanced myself from them. I have nothing against other patients, but the majority of them clearly has a different type of scarring or illness than I do. But despite that, I remain civil and even found two nice young ladies to hang out with. I've forgotten their exact ages at this point, but I remember them being in their 20s. They were extremely welcoming since the day I stepped foot in this place, and I look forward to joining them at the table today.

I'm not even sure if I've written about them in earlier pages of this diary, my memory isn't the best... But hey what does it matter, it's my own written junk anyways. Shalon, a Draconic humanoid with beautiful silver scales and white horns, is the biggest sweetheart of this entire place in my opinion. She's the one who came running up to me when I just arrived and gave me a hug without hesitation. She's obviously outgoing and cheery, a little hyper at times but it's nothing I cannot handle. I have a son with simultaneous hyperactivity after all haha. She had been born with a mental condition that only worsened after her people suffered a war, pretty much on the other side of the world, and she got involved against her will. But after all, she's a nice dragon to talk to whenever she's taken in her medicine, but without it it's kind of draining at times. And bet she's a forgetful type. Then there's Lyaa, a Pomeranian dog humanoid with soft, blonde fur. Extremely shy and with a completely opposite personality than what would be expected of her breed. The poor thing had to watch her family getting killed before her very eyes at a younger age. Unfortunate trauma scarred both of these girls and once I got to know their stories, I've felt a large wave of compassion overwhelming me. They're good people who didn't deserve what came towards them. But I soon learned that everyone in this place has their own journey, and the least what can be done is for each individual to be respected and supported. Well, enough backstory

for now. I can't wait for the waffles to leave the kitchen.

The ambience colored yellow when Nicole stepped through the doors towards the shared dining room. It was huge and had space for every patient that stayed in this wing of the mental hospital. As it was right outside Elmore, the hospital wasn't as large as the common ones that were spread out in the state. But that doesn't mean there weren't crowded spots in this one at times, as all places available were taken. Nicole peeked with her widened eyes until she caught the glimpse of her two friends at one of the tables next to the windows. The blue feline stretched her shoulders before sitting down after they both waved at her. She leaned back in her chair and took a deep breath, smelling the warm dough having left the ovens in the kitchen. Shalon shivered a bit while fidgeting with her hospital tag and Lyaa immediately took her chance to hand the dragon her medicine. "Here, I know you forget it easily," the Pomeranian said while handing Shalon the tiny white container. "Eek! Thanks, Lyaa. What am I without you?" the silver dragon responded with a thankful nod, as she took a few pills in. "Did both of you girls sleep well?" Nicole asked to break the ice on her end. Lyaa yawned. "Mhm. It was fine. Can't complain about those well-working sleep aids though," she responded with a tremble in her voice.

"What about you, Nic?!" Shalon exclaimed while struggling with waiting for her turn to speak. Nicole chuckled and rested her head on one of her paws. "Honestly? Best sleep I've had in a while. Insomnia got kicked in the butt."
"I'm glad," Lyaa calmly said while giving a subtle nod. "I've been waiting for another waffle day, oh boy!" shouted Shalon. Lyaa's ears twitched for a second before she gently put her paw on the dragon's shoulder. "Remember to keep your voice a bit down, sweetie," she said with a slight smile. Shalon covered her mouth and whispered, "oops! Sorry my bad! It's just that I'm very excited about this."
"Waffle day? But that's every Thursday, you know that right?" Nicole pointed out. "I know! But waiting six days every time has me impatient heheh," Shalon responded. "Fair enough."
After a few minutes, the room with patients was accompanied by a few nurses handing out filled plates and as soon as the three each got theirs, they dug in without hesitation. "Not saying I'm unhappy with the simpler food we usually get, but I must admit it's appreciable that they put in one day of the week with some edible celebration," Nicole spoke after awkwardly swallowing a bite that was clearly too big for her. Shalon chuckled. "I know what you mean. I find it nice too. Kind of distracts from the whole 'standard hospital' food thing," said Lyaa before taking a gentle sip of her apple juice. Nicole's

eyes moved from the Pomeranian's glass towards her own and she slowly grabbed it, staring thoroughly into the gold-colored liquid. It's not that she didn't like apple juice, but the color reminded her all too much of liquors she used to drink during weekends. Ever since her physical system began deteriorating during the worst period of her life she didn't feel like drinking at all anymore. She was responsible and tolerant enough before those days though, but now completely distanced from it. *Ah well, it doesn't matter now, does it?*

The afternoon went by as if it were a montage. A montage of mindfulness exercises, socializing and spending a few hours alone. That last part was something Nicole noticed she really needed and had gotten the opportunity to wind down in her separated bedroom after dinner every day. She picked up her teenage hobby of drawing on paper, which she despite not having done for a long time still had some skill for. Drawing had always given her the necessary outlet to express herself and it left her slightly heartbroken before, when work caused her not having time for it anymore. Now she felt glad she could bounce back into it and had been creating tons of pages with art, which she preferred to keep to herself though. Most of the drawings had a dark vibe, while she wasn't even able to remember having made the other ones. She shook her head after closing the door behind her and sat

down on her bed in the tiny room. Folding her legs upright, she rested her sketchbook on her lap and sketched some feelings away. She carefully moved the pencil over the paper as the graphite marked its track. Though that's when it stopped. Her paw released her pencil, and she watched it roll from her sketchbook onto the bed sheets. She felt unusual yet could remember having felt that way before. It's at this moment when her paws began to tremble, and her mind sounded an alarm. She had forgotten again. Snorting in annoyance, she frustratedly jumped up and took a short sprint towards the door, immediately opening it and disappearing at the other side of the dorms. Her breath became shaky and irregular as her vocal cords made space for subtle but freaky growls, to a point where she had the forcibly hold her muzzle shut until she'd reach the nurse she was looking for. A white fennec wasn't hard to recognize in crowds, yet Nicole had a hard time due to her vision simultaneously blurring out in this moment. She reached out her other paw that wasn't holding her snout and steadily grasped the small syringe from the fennec's paw, who patiently waited for her to inject it. She took a deep breath before handing it back, muttering; "would it be a better idea to keep a stack of these in my room?"
"That's exactly what I've been wanting to say as I brought a box this time," the fennec nurse spoke before handing over the cardboard

package to the blue cat. "I'll try my best not to pull such a risk again," Nicole said while noticing the nurse wanting to make a comment about her rushed approach. The fennec nodded while trying her best not to display the fright she was actually feeling. Nicole returned a smile that lasted two seconds before turning around with the box in her paws, headed back to her room. The first week after her arrival here had been disastrous. She often found herself having to hide away in different spots whenever her physical system gave its usual signals or oddly timed triggers. Her condition unfortunately hadn't gone back from the level it had in the forest. Her bones no longer cut through flesh like it did back then though, but overall her body seemed unable to reverse the sickness or the damage it did. Which is when the nurses had been contacting the many medical resources Erin used to get his information from. Those same labs had been researching antidotary organisms for generalized purposes and Erin got lucky once he found a lead towards the Arthrus herb thanks to them. It's unfortunate the plant had lost its effect on the feline over the years though. But despite Erin no longer being there, a few individuals formed a group to carry Nicole's support further and had made the choice not to let the government's claims influence them nor the situation from before. Part of these individuals were the very nurses working at the *Aspira*

Hospital right here. In secret, Nicole eventually had gotten the chance to start usage of effective sedatives. As normal tranquilizers no longer served the effect to either make her pass out or reverse her transforming, a new alternative had to be discovered. Following Furore's knowledge about how the condition became malformed, the lab found a way to extract cells from deceased carnivorous animals without those carrying bacteria like normally would be the case. Those same cells, mostly from wolves and felines, combined with melatonin formed the new and custom for Nicole only sedative to prevent her feral episodes like she used to be able to, along with being able to survive on a normal diet. No more robbing civilians from their beloved pets or causing terror in natural parks. It all sounded pretty figured out, with Nicole even experiencing fewer negative side-effects than used to be the case with the Arthrus. But the risk didn't fade. It never did. The cat should not forget.

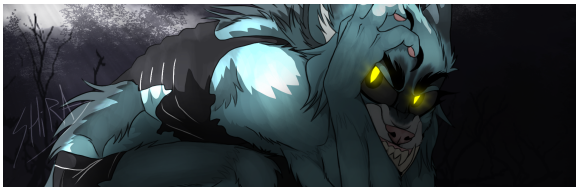
Ever since Furore had gotten separated from controlling bits of her body, it never felt as stressed as it did before. Even after its redemption and realization it and Nicole were on the same side, its emotions had been all over the place. Every time Nicole would even slightly experience a bit of a fallback or a mistake, such as how she just almost forgot her dose, Furore would become interruptive and lose grip over

its own frustration. They both definitely still had stuff to work out and required more time than they already had gotten. The blue feline closed the door of her room with a deep sigh. *Let's try this again.* She carefully placed the box on top of her small desk and couldn't be bothered to remove the packages from the syringes. Instead, she crashed down onto the bed and whimpered. Her eyes widened as tears evolved in them and she kept her limbs spread out on the sheets, lying on her back. She lost the energy to get up again and it didn't matter to her now anyways. Every now and then a restless night made a return to trigger her own sensitivity. It's not that her past months in this place had been terrible, but she just wished to go back. She wished she could be... normal... again. *What even is normal anymore...* Her head hurt as she felt her nose twitching. Silently she cried, awaiting a wave of internal shouting from Furore... but nothing could be heard from it. She kept lying there for an hour, not even being remotely aware of the time nor feeling like she was on her place right now. Tears stopped flowing down her cheeks once realization came to her again; Furore felt too nervous for the day after. It'd be the day she'd see her beloved family again. They promised her they'd try their best to visit weekly, and always kept their word. It's what made her time here less hard. Because despite all the help she got and positive notes she could make, it remained hard. Hard to be

traumatized and chronically sick.

Chapter 2

2



Fucking hell. Just goshdarn fucking hell. There are no other words to describe the anger that boiled up because of that old rabbit. I wish she never came along- or at least, shut her mouth. I can't take any of this anymore and today's not a 'happy Friday'. I've been a murderer in the past - against my own will - but am struggling to keep that behind me. What a monster I was bound to become... or be born as. And that stupid old bag really had to remind me of what I am... Of what I can't change. Being. A goshdarn predator. And not just any. A stupid doomed apex bloodthirsty beast because of a wretched sickness. I want this day to be over already.

Nicole threw her diary to the opposite corner of

her room as soon as she wrote down the last word. She snarled in rage and held her head tightly, squeezing her eyes closed with tears messily running down her cheeks and wetting her fur. It all went so well. One single thing simply had to ruin it, how unexpected it was. She dug her claws into her scalp until she felt the pain from how sharp they were. They never hadn't been. Long, curved claws. Keratin daggers that could turn... monstrous.

It was a Friday morning when Nicole failed getting up before her alarm for the first time in a long while and even struggled more than ever with pulling herself out of the sheets. It reminded her of her previous days before all the mayhem, when she simply wasn't the morning person type of mother. But now it felt weird and unusual. She worked so hard on becoming a stable being, but a doubtful part of her knows she won't ever be who she wants to be. At least that's how she feels... Despite all the drain, the blue feline carried her body towards the bathroom and freshened herself up. A slight smile did manage to get cracked on her face and she carefully watched her reflection in the mirror as she got herself into a clean gown. Most of her physical scars had fully faded away thanks to good resting, but some of them were going to be there for the rest of her life. She no longer tears up when looking at them, thinking about the memories they carry, but that's

something that took time to get used to. Nicole was proud of her progress and her overall mood had been going up for the last months. It's simply this morning that turned out different than the others, but she tried not to think about that too much. After taking one last glance into the mirror, she turned around and went for the door, making her way towards the common dining room for breakfast. Lyaa and Shalon were there like they usually were and despite Nicole feeling quite off for the first time this day, neither of the two girls appeared to feel the same way. "Are you sure you're alright?" Lyaa asked timidly before taking a bite into a bun.
"What? Why wouldn't it," Nicole responded while trying to seem as normal as possible, "everything's alright, like it always is."
"Well, I just sense that there's some blue with you too. And no- not in the literal way, heh."
Nicole managed to laugh at the little joke Lyaa made. "Well, I appreciate it anyhow that you're checking up," the blue feline responded with a subtle nod. Shalon kept herself quiet during this time, which eventually turned into the first unusual thing on her end. The dragon raised one of her brows when her eyes locked on Nicole's arm that rested on the table and she noticed how violently the feline's paws were trembling. She then carefully patted Nicole on her right shoulder, "is your blood pressure okay?"
Nicole's ears folded backwards as they lowered

and she firmly grabbed her own wrist with her other paw, trying to keep them still. "I'm fine," she muttered lifelessly. Shalon's pupils enlarged as she felt herself becoming sensitive for this other face of Nicole she had never seen before. "Everything was so great at breakfast every day. Something must be wrong, isn't there?" the small dragon squeaked. "Please, just- don't worry about it," Nicole responded while trying her best to sound as reassuring as possible. "I think I just didn't feel too well while sleeping last night and might need to catch on some hours. You know, 'cuz of the medicine and all. That's why I'm trembling. Probably."
Lyaa briefly stroked Shalon on her back and gave Nicole a nod. "It's okay, Nic. Please take the rest you need though," she said. Nicole nodded as well and quickly finished her bun before heading back to her dorm. Lyaa and Shalon locked eye contact for a moment as they watched the blue cat walk away.

Morning turned into late afternoon once Nicole got woken up from her nap. It were some hours of rest she definitely needed, yet she didn't understand why she felt more tired than usual. She did get full hours of sleep last night, but felt extremely disoriented for most of the day. *Probably Furore's deal,* she thought to herself. *Might as well blame everything uneasy on it, easier for me.* The same white fennec as the night before was there to wake her up once she

got informed of the feline's snoozing. "Your family has come to visit, Mrs. Watterson," she spoke after knocking on the door. Nicole rubbed one of her eyes as soon as she threw her legs over the side of the bed and got up on her feet. "Thanks for informing me," she said while trying not to sound too foggy. The fennec nurse nodded and made her way back once she noticed Nicole managing to prepare herself on her own. When Nicole cleaned her face with some cold water and brushed the fur on the sides of her cheeks, she gave her reflection in the mirror one more glare. Her black pupils were restlessly constricted, and it caught her as off guard as the other unusual signals she had been experiencing that day. She shook her head and turned off the lights upon exiting her dorm, closing the door behind her. She popped her stiff neck and took a peek around the corner where her family supposedly awaited in the visitors' room. Her ears perched up as soon as she locked eye contact with her husband. Both of them smiled broadly and the feline immediately hugged the bunny tightly once she made her way over to them. She then kneeled down to hug each of her three children tightly and some warmth returned into her heart. "It's good to see you again, you guys," she said while peacefully keeping her arms on her back. "Same for us," Richard spoke while stroking the fur on the back of his wife's head. Darwin and Anais both seemed nervous about the encounter,

despite having visited often before at this point. But Gumball being his usual self implied nothing special had to be wrong. At least that's what Nicole was hoping... until she got a glance of another visitor that was tagged along with her family. A short, chubby, and aged pink rabbit removed her sunglasses from her eyes as soon as she stepped forward. "Joanna..." Nicole began with a slightly impatient tone but didn't finish her sentence. "Yes, well- she insisted on coming along with us. Hasn't seen you in a while, you know?" Richard said as he stepped aside for his mother to join the group. "I just wanted another look at your face in order to prove I mean it when I wish for you to recover soon," Joanna said. "Well... I appreciate the good intention," Nicole responded while faking a smile on her face. *Is that what you've been so nervous for, Furore?!* "Why don't we, sit down and share a coffee?" the blue feline added while pointing into the direction of the coffeemaker, "there's a limited time for visitors anyways."
Richard nodded and all of them sat down at the table that was set up behind them. A few other visitors marked the room accompanied, but it was peaceful overall. Nicole took gentle sips from her tea and didn't say a word until ice could genuinely be broken. Normally she'd chat a lot with her family to catch up on things, but right now she felt a barrier due to all the things she endured because of Jojo. She never actually hated the older rodent, but simply didn't match

energy with her and struggled with getting along. No matter how much she tried to. And some sick part of her felt like she was soon discovering why that was. "So, does this place strike like a retirement home?" Joanna spoke unexpectedly after sipping on her cup of coffee. "No, it does not. A psychiatric hospital is far from where you old folks get locked up in," Nicole spoke with slight bitterness in her voice. Her arms began to tremble as soon as the ice eventually broke. "Oh well, I do know that. Just trying to cheer you up with a joke," the old rabbit responded with a grin. "Well this isn't good timing for a joke like that, thank you very much," Nicole meowed back. Joanna rolled her eyes and lifted her cup. "Oh well. I tried my best."

Nicole's fist suddenly clenched and destroyed the now empty paper cup that was in her paw. "No you didn't."

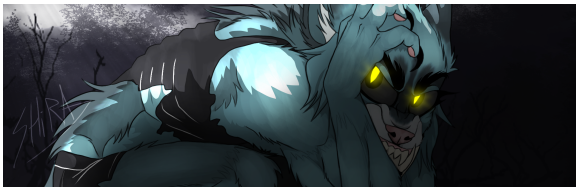
"Please, please, let's just have a calm and normal chat as a family," Richard said while trying to prevent the potentially starting argument. "Yeah, this place does have a calm aura to it I must say," Gumball said while mimicking a British accent. "And where did you learn that word?" Nicole asked while appearing to be a bit calmer, having a slight smirk on her face now. Gumball pointed at Anais, who seemed to be more at peace now as well. "Well good job on the vocabulary lessons," Nicole added while chuckling. "How have you been

holding up, Mrs. Mom?" Darwin asked politely while appearing to be more comfortable as well. "Oh, well... You know. Just like last weeks, simply resting, hanging out with those two other sweet patients I told about and... healing. Trying to."
"Just know, no matter if it's a reminder every week, that I hope it'll all be figured out soon," the young goldfish said with beaded eyes. Nicole smiled again and stared at her squished cup, slowly releasing it from her resting paw. "I really appreciate it, Darwin. No matter how often."
Darwin gave a smile back and Anais gave her adoptive brother a nod. "Weekly visits. Sure must be nice getting those, ain't it?" Joanna said out of a sudden with obvious jealousy projected onto her speech. Nicole's smile went away like a cloud covering up the sun. "Oh really? You have to contribute with that?" she said while becoming restless again. "Mom, please," Richard spoke as he turned to his mother. "Oh I'm sorry! I'm just trying to add a bit for some conversation. One that we can have altogether. Like you wanted, as a family, right?"
"Richard, why did you take her with you...?" Nicole murmured audibly enough for her husband to pick up. "Because I thought it would've been a tad more meaningful than this," he responded. "I thought you guys promised to get along," he added, more out loud for both of them to hear. "It's not my fault she

can't stand me." Nicole growled while dropping her cup into the trash can that stood behind her chair. "I'm sorry?!" Joanna immediately fired back. "Well, there's the truth for ya, isn't it? That you hate me?!" the feline exclaimed as her voice cracked. "I'm so sorry, Nicole, this wasn't meant to turn out like this," Richard softly spoke to Nicole. "Oh no it's fine," she responded for the five of them to hear, "I think visit time is over for today."

Chapter 3

3



Clear heartbreak was hearable in Nicole's voice. Heartbreak from uprising memories. "I never hated you, Nicole," Joanna spoke again. Nicole got up from her chair in a rush and crossed her arms as a frown formed on her face. "Oh no? Then why all the sarcastic comments and unfitting humor then? I know you've had something against me since the MOMENT I went out with your son. My parents, my own goshdarn parents never approved of him and I did all I could to convince them he was the right one for me. And what did you do? Instead of teaching your son about the outside world in its fullest you decided to bottle up your own grief and problems whilst doubting everything he loves! As much as my parents tried to protect

me, I don't think I've ever, EVER met someone as overly protective as you!"
Joanna gulped as she didn't expect Nicole to tense up even more like that but couldn't stop herself from giving a response. "Oh?! Now there are many things you do not understand then, Nicole," she began, "I was a single mother. With a divorced criminal father on the loose who never bothered showing up for our son. Our beloved son who we had great wishes for! The outside world is so cruel, and you just couldn't stop introducing him to danger... That's why- I've... doubted so much."
"And you think that doubt is healthy?! I've picked up half of your work to raise this bunny and look how far he's gotten now. Thanks to ME, AND you're welcome!"
"You didn't raise my child, Nicole... You sure managed to get more sense into him, but you didn't *raise* him. No one raises a child once they've passed their eighteenth year," Joanna said with a slightly terrified tone.
"Well maybe raising isn't the best word. But what is it then, Joanna? What is it then that you don't like about me except for the fact I've been wanting to help Richard improve himself?"
"The dangers you've showed him," the old rodent spoke, "he's been going through pain a lot and I know how hard it is for him considered how sensitive he is."
"Pain is part of LIFE, Joanna. Everyone endures pain. The only thing you're doing right now is

trying to justify the unhealthy way of raising you've given him."
"How *dare you*... I've loved my son more than ever and still do!"
"WHAT IS THE DANGER ISSUE, JOANNA?!" Nicole shouted as soon as her patience snapped.
"It's hard to explain!"
"Well then TRY TO!"
Joanna kept herself quiet for a moment, staring at Richard and the kids who silently watched how the two argued, not daring to interfere.
"It's you, Nicole."
"I'm sorry, what?!"
"I said, it's *you*. You are the danger I've worried about for... years."
"B-because of my... *issue?* Joanna that wasn't present or known to you up until a few years ago, so that can't be it."
"No, you don't get it..."
"Well I don't get it either. Just spill it!"
"You are a PREDATOR, Nicole!" Joanna gasped right after noticing her own raised voice. Nicole felt paralyzed in her pose as soon as those words reached her hearing. Some other visitors backed away and left the room once their argument unfolded, clearly not wanting to have anything to do with it. The blue feline locked eye contact with the bunny again and her face morphed into an aggravated snarl. "That is what you've been hiding away for all those years? Putting that into all the useless hate and disapproving of me...? For what I was BORN as,

bothered you...?"
Joanna slowly nodded while backing away. "This conversation is OVER, you HEAR ME?!" Nicole shouted before storming off without saying another word. Joanna's eyes became watery as she was as shocked by her own words as the others, and she turned around to face her son. He shook his head and didn't know what to think of it. "I'm sorry son, for all-"
"Don't even bother," he interrupted her and turned around, letting Anais take his paw as he walked out of the room with his children. Joanna stayed put for a few minutes and wiped her eyes dry with a tissue she grabbed from her purse, before eventually shaking her head as well and leaving the building to take the bus home. Nicole cried and tore into pieces of paper with her claws as soon as she closed her dorm's door behind her. Years of hatred. Useless hatred for something she couldn't control. She panted heavily when grabbing a pencil from her desk and started writing in her opened diary that was laying on her bed earlier. She couldn't even focus enough on writing properly and the scribbles on the paper were hardly readable. Not that she cared, but she couldn't help but throw all her boiling rage out that clearly had been bottled up as well. She hadn't felt... angry in a long time. Something she used to be so used to. Now was a rarity. However that was expected to change once again...

Nicole froze once she heard a known voice outside her door accompanied by a knock. Shalon and Lyaa had spotted the blue feline storm off as well as a few other patients, and they made the nearest nurses aware of it too. "Hey, are you alright, Nic?" Shalon spoke with a timid voice as she kept her ear up against the door. Nicole didn't give a sign of life and instead, stood completely still as she restlessly panted and unsheathed her claws. "Nicole?" Lyaa spoke, "please, we saw you walk away. We're not going to hurt you or whatever, we just want to be there for you."
The blue feline stopped tensing up her muscles as she straightened her back a bit, but her claws didn't disappear yet. She slowly approached the door and opened it up, spotting the dragon and dog on her doorstep. Nicole's eyes went from Lyaa's face to Shalon's, spotting both their worried expressions which made the sting the blue feline was experiencing more intense. She always hated it when others had to suffer because of her too, despite not really anything having happened right now that impacted them. They just wanted to check if she was alright. Like friends do. It's something Nicole normally would've known easily, but right now she doesn't know what to think anymore... She can't stop feeling restless and even fears the argument with Joanna formed a negative trigger. "You okay?" Lyaa softly spoke to awaken Nicole from her empty glare. "I'm fine,"

she muttered angrily. "I'm really sorry but that doesn't sound like you're fine," Lyaa responded. Out of a sudden, Nicole's eyes widened as her pupils turned into slits and she violently raised her head to stare the Pomeranian in the eye. "I am FINE," she repeated, more loudly this time. "W-what's going on?" Shalon stammered, "t-this is nothing l-like you, Nicole!"
Shalon covered her mouth when the blue feline quickly moved her glare towards the small dragon, who began tearing up. "It's nothing personal. Just, please... keep... your... distance," Nicole growled as her paws tensed up again. Shalon glanced over her shoulder at Lyaa who still stood beside her and the two looked each other in the eye with the most concerned expressions Nicole had never seen on them before. "I- I'm s-scared," Shalon stammered, grasping onto Lyaa's longer arm. Those words unfortunately didn't sit well with Nicole in that moment as her frown suddenly intensified and her teeth showed themselves under her lips. Lyaa took a step back with Shalon upon noticing this. "You DON'T have to be scared," Nicole softly snarled, "then why ARE YOU?!"
"Cut it out!" Lyaa exclaimed, not expecting her own voice to raise itself. Three nurses, artic foxes, who were informed earlier now made their way to the entrance of Nicole's dorm as well, where they all were standing. Once the feline caught a glimpse of them, she felt like she was losing it completely, feeling a wave of

anxiety and rage rush through her. Shalon shook her head and decided to make herself braver for the sake of comforting her friend. But as soon as she placed her paw on the aggravated cat's shoulder, the fuse snapped. Almost faster than the speed of sound, Nicole clenched her paws into fists and threw one right towards Shalon's face, hitting her hard enough for it to bleed. Lyaa and the three nurses took a step back out of reflex and the Pomeranian covered her face at this sight of violence. She started feeling completely lost as it triggered her own anxiety and she looked away in fear. The three nurses immediately took action and two grabbed Nicole's arms to prevent her from making any other violent moves. The third checked up on Shalon, who fell over because of the heavy impact from the cat's punch. Nicole's heavy breathing only started to worsen and once one of the foxes attempted giving her a dose of her medication, the feline lost it once again. It was the worst timing to feel a needle stab her tensed muscle and she escaped the nurse's grip once the other inserted the syringe. The feline grabbed the needle and pulled it out as soon as she freed herself, only to throw it on the ground where it shattered and to sprint away to the bathroom.

The door of the bathroom shut behind Nicole with a loud slam and she locked it, only for her to lean with her back against it and slowly slide

onto the floor with her knees up. She buried her head in her paws and sobbed silently for a moment. Her eyes were already reddened from crying before, but that only worsened in this moment. Her cheeks were completely drowned by her tears, and she had trouble picking herself up from the floor. She felt her heart racing inside her chest and knew it would've been better if she had allowed the nurse to inject the medicine into her arm. But she simply couldn't take it in that moment. Unfortunate effects of her own condition began to show as her bones started aching. But as an episode hadn't occurred in so long, the changes were extremely slow. She felt her spine quaking as parts of her subtly began growing and shifting. Wildly shaking her head, she tried to brush off the pain and ignored what was slowly happening to her body. Once she managed to limp towards the sink, she leaned with her paws on the fake marble and carried the rest of her body upwards to stand up again. She then bent forward and stared deeply into her own eyes in the mirror. ***"What the fuck have you done, Nicole,"*** a familiar rough voice spoke. Nicole's deep frown returned as a thunderstorm welled up inside her head and she stared at her fist which was covered in blood splatters from Shalon's face. She huffed and immediately threw another hard punch, this time straight into the mirror, aiming for her own face in the reflection. The glass shattered and bits of her own blood

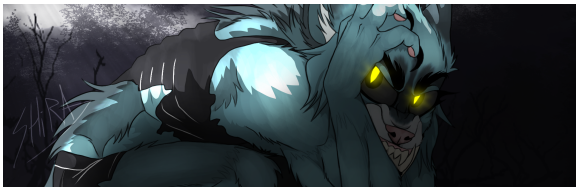
started to show as well on her fist...

Richard's ears lowered as soon as he hung up the phone. His eyes began tearing up and he failed keeping himself together like he wanted. It had been three days since he went to visit his wife in the Aspira Hospital and already was worrying for the worst to happen after. He just heard about the nurses' concern that Nicole no longer made the hospital a safe place for all patients and even had attacked one. The nurse he spoke to on the phone did say she understood it wasn't intended from Nicole, but explained charges had to be made and the feline would be placed in a different faculty. All Richard got to know about that new place was its address and only could hope it was for the better. The pink bunny wiped his eyes dry and turned around, only to immediately stumble upon his daughter checking up on him. "Dad? Are you okay...?" Anais spoke with caution as she knew something clearly struck her father's sensitive heart. Richard sighed, "I heard back from the nurse and... you mother's being moved to another place."
"Another place? Where? And... why?" Anais asked. "The name of the place wasn't given, only its address, and it's all because of... a little incident."
Anais gasped. "But worry not. This is for the best," Richard added to reassure his daughter. "I guess so," the little bunny spoke, "after all,

they're experts who know what they are doing, right?"
Richard nodded and briefly hugged Anais before making his way upstairs to break the news to Gumball and Darwin. Meanwhile Anais inspected the address that was written down on a note, on the table where her father was sitting. Assuming it was the address he mentioned, she copied the information on another piece of paper and took it with her. Something didn't feel right on her end about the address. But she would look further into it as soon as she could...

Chapter 4

4



Heavy metal chains rattled and clicked against each other when the blue feline entered a dark building under guidance and supervision. Her shoulders were high and tensed up as she kept her face low, not liking any part of the new environment where she was told to spend from now on. During the trip that took hours from the trusted Aspira Hospital, she already began missing Lyaa and Shalon lots. Furthermore, she couldn't stop feeling utterly horrible for having attacked the innocent little dragon a few days ago. She hadn't shown her face to either of them during that time. Not that she was able to anyway, but it was hard. Another harsh mistake where she felt like she lost all. Her grief morphed into rage ever since her wrists got

locked in those chains. She knew it was all for security, yet she didn't know what the guiders took her for. She could only hope to be able to see her family again, which should be a possibility, right? Tears once again streamed down her face which maintained with an enraged expression as she walked down the alleyway in the tall building. The walls were bricked and painted black, making everything seem and feel much narrower than it truly was. Every now and then piles of chains that were used before would mark the corners where other parts of the halls came together. Nicole felt her whiskers tremble as fear started rising up within her again. Fear of the unknown that haunted this place. No one spoke a word, not even the guiders when they were being informed of her new enclosure. Everything happened non-verbally and Nicole felt as if she was going to be jailed like she used to be. *Great. Going through all of this again*, she thought to herself. As soon as the four masked guiders took a few sidesteps to show her an unlocked metal gate, verbal communication was used again. "Welcome to your new home," one of them spoke with a deep voice. Nicole got escorted through the gate and as soon as it closed behind her, the chains around her wrists were loosened and removed. Feeling slightly glad to no longer have chains around her arms, Nicole got aware there were no turning back now. She quickly adjusted the fabric from the black singlet she

was wearing, it being accompanied by black, cotton shorts that were clearly too big on her scrawny figure. She needed a belt to keep it in place, but as belts weren't allowed in this place either, she got reassured by a long elastic band she could wrap around instead. Not minding her new clothing, despite wondering why the fabric was so loose and thin, she had no choice but to go for a look around. She glanced over her shoulder once more and saw the masked guiders disappeared as fast as water in a colander. It then came to the feline's realization she got placed in an asylum, and not just any...

Nicole meowed out loud when she suddenly got startled by a smaller figure letting out a bark behind her. She sternly turned around and glared downwards at a little anthropomorphic husky boy, who snickered as he covered his snout in mischief. "Don't scare me like that, you little-!" Nicole exclaimed while grabbing hold onto her own tail. "Hehehe! Gotcha real bad there!" said the husky in an obviously young and child-like voice. "I-is that how you treat all newcomers?!" Nicole said, still struggling with calming herself down. "Worry not," said the husky, "I'm not gonna hurt you with any pranks, miss."
"Who are you?" Nicole asked once she felt a little calmer. "I don't know what my real name is as I never knew my parents, but everyone around here likes to call me Chase. I don't mind

if you call me that too," the husky spoke with a broad, innocent smile. "Well, nice to meet you, Chase. My name is-," "Nicole? Yup, heard about you," the husky interrupted. "You... heard about me?" she asked. "Yup! You see, we all get informed a few days beforehand when there's a new inmate coming to our place."
"I-inmate?" Nicole stammered while quickly looking around. "We're all inmates here, miss," the husky said, "being a werewolf is a crime active since birth after all."
"W-what?!" Nicole exclaimed. "Shh, you don't wanna wake up the elders in our pack!" hushed the husky boy. "But you were the one barking in the first place!" Nicole whispered. Chase shrugged and smiled once again. Nicole couldn't help but to suddenly think about her eldest son, how chaotic and prankster-like he could be as well. She chuckled and got herself together. "Well, Chase, why don't you explain a bit what is going on here?"
Chase grabbed Nicole's paw and pulled her arm into the opposite direction, only for her to almost trip and follow him around. First the little husky pointed at the middle spot of the large enclosure that had an open roof, with a visible starry sky giving away it was evening during this moment. "Over there is the gathering spot were we all howl after having transformed," said Chase. "Wait... howl? Transformed?" Nicole stopped to look the little husky in the eye who raised one of his brows, "is

this a werewolf asylum?" she whispered. "Well duh! That's why you got sent to this place, miss. Can't you remember anything or something?" Chase responded while crossing his arms. "I genuinely have no idea, buddy," she said while anxiously looking around. "Something seems to bother ya, what is it?" Chase spoke. "Oh no, it's nothing..." Nicole answered, "trust me."

Nicole figured it'd be best if she kept quiet about her confusion and apparent misplacement, since her research about werewolves from a long time ago had given her useful information. Back when she didn't know what her condition was about or that it was a rare phenomenon in the first place, she used to research all there was known and written down about werewolves. She used to think she perhaps could be one of them, only for Erin's research to prove otherwise. But back in those days she became more aware of Lycans and their characteristics that appeared to be present within all of them. One of those being the fact they were even more closely bonded as pack than any other supernatural creature and that being the main reason why they valued familiarity above anything. Nicole also knew the entire pack of werewolves that was present here could easily tear her apart if they discovered she wasn't a familiarity they care about so much. She gulped at that thought and decided it was time to lie again, unfortunately.

"I must've hit my head," Nicole said while

snapping herself out of her thoughts again. "Oh? Well, that's understandable. All of us had to travel for hours before we got here, so I don't doubt it was the same case for you," Chase said. Nicole mumbled and nodded. "Well, let's get on with the tour," Chase spoke before grasping hold onto the feline's paw again, and the two walked further. "Over here is the place where you receive packages of food in your normal form," Chase pointed at an empty, undecorated bar setup that was turned into a food counter, "and on the other side is where fresh kill gets dumped every three full moon nights for, well, feeding your wolf form!"

Nicole gulped once again when she noticed the pile of bones that were left behind from the previous time. She took a moment to inspect her fellow inmates that didn't seem to acknowledge her presence, but managed to at least get a good look at them. Most of them looked like as if their wolfish traits had really integrated into their normal form, with parts of their body being half transformed rather than turned back. It was a freakish sight, but Nicole could handle it. She knew well about what she could become herself... "So, you basically grab food from the other place three nights a row... when the full moon's out?" the feline asked for affirmation. "Yep, you got it!" said Chase with a smile. Nicole smiled back and started to feel a little more at ease now she had company. "Just- out of curiosity," she began, "why did you

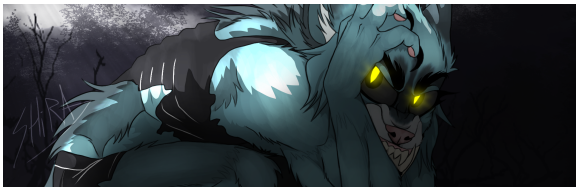
decide to tag along with me from the moment you saw my appearance?"
"Oh I like meeting new faces!" said Chase, "besides, all the others are already grown and boring."
"Boring?" Nicole chuckled, "what makes you think I'm different then? I'm pretty much grown myself."
"You just- have a different vibe I guess," Chase responded. "I have a different vibe?" Nicole asked. "Well, yeah! Maybe it's because you're younger than them perhaps? Thirty, is it?" Chase timidly asked. Nicole laughed, "no, sweetie. I appreciate the compliment, but I'm far past that. I'm in my forties."
Nicole chuckled at the face Chase made once he heard that. He then placed one of his paws on his cheek, "are you a mother perhaps?"
"Yes. How did you guess?" Nicole asked while still smiling. "I think that's the explanation for the vibe I felt. I haven't seen a mother in a while, you know..." Chase's expression turned a bit blue. Nicole's ears lowered as her smile disappeared as well and she immediately placed a paw on his shoulder. "Hey, it's okay. You're helping me out a lot in this new place already, let me do that in return," Nicole said as she smiled again. Chase's smile returned as well, and he jumped up. "Awesome!" he exclaimed, "now let me show you the last important bit of this place."
Nicole followed Chase as he showed the dorms.

"These individual cells is where everyone stays during normal nights to rest. I hope you don't mind company," the husky explained. "It's- it's fine. I can get used to this," Nicole said with a bit of a tremble in her voice. "Good thing is, if it's hard to get used to, you'll be staying with me!" Chase said while waving his little paws in the air. Nicole chuckled, "I don't mind at all, little one."

Chase giggled and gave the feline a smile once more. Nicole started to appreciate this fellow having bumped into her, despite how much she was missing her home.

Chapter 5

5



"So, what are we planning?" Furore's voice echoed inside Nicole's head. She held onto her twitching ears for a brief moment while hiding in the darkest corner of the dorm. Messy and damaged mattrasses besides her made it feel like she was locked in a prison cell, which was technically the case. *"W-what do you mean with that?"* she spoke in mind, responding to the entity. ***"Don't act like you've forgotten you're clearly pretending to be one of them, hm?"*** it said with slight aggression in its tone. *"What else am I supposed to do?! You should know you're at the same risk here of dying as I do."*
"Oh really? And you think a large pack of Lycanthropes can defeat us?"
"Uh, yes?"

"Fair point."
"Now could you please shut up before we-"
"Miss! There you are!" Chase exclaimed once he appeared in the doorstep of their dorm. Nicole quickly shook her head and turned around in the corner where she was standing to face the little husky. "What are you doing here and who were you talking to?" he asked. "Oh! Uh- no one! I was just talking to myself, heh. Why all the hurry?" she responded. "You'll miss the moon ceremony!" he exclaimed without seeming to doubt what Nicole answered. "I'm sorry, but what's-"
"The moon ceremony!" Chase interrupted, "it's the first full moon of the three nights every month. You see, transforming is the least fun part about being a werewolf, so we endure it altogether."
"I see," Nicole spoke softly, "well I know all about that pain..."
"Perfect! I mean- not- you get what I mean," Chase said before opening the dorm's door again. Nicole nodded as soon as she noticed the little husky turn his face to her side once more. "Aren't you coming?" he asked with lowered ears. "I uh... prefer d-doing this alone. First time in a crowd, y'know?" Nicole stammered, feeling her fear return. Luckily, Chase was understanding. "Alright! Just don't forget to meet me at the pile for food!" he exclaimed, seeming fine with everything and made his way back to the pack. It then were only a few

minutes left until the full moon would rise up right. Nicole returned to her corner in the shadows and muttered stressfully. *"Furore, you hear me? I'm afraid this has to happen..."*
"Ugh, as if I didn't see this coming. Well how do you expect me to turn our body when I've clearly established how I no longer have control over our physical parts?"
"Please, I beg you! We'll both be dead otherwise!"
Furore didn't give any answer or sign of life after that, and Nicole feared it was ignoring her now. She then got startled by the painful screams and yowls outside the dorm, clearly from the large group of werewolves that gathered in the middle as they transformed. Nicole started to genuinely panic and she squeezed her wrist with her other paw. "Fuck!" Nicole cursed out loud when she heard the yowls turn into howling, indicating the Lycans finished shifting. She started pulling out tufts of fur from the fluff on her cheeks and growled. But before she knew it, her spine gave in on letting her stand upright and she fell to the stone floor. She had to catch herself with her paws and groaned once her system began trembling and aching. Somehow her body did get to this point. She then remembered she didn't have the medicine with her and realized it was an episode she'd usually have. Those syringes must've been kept somewhere in the asylum. Right now she could only hope for her being able to make use of the medicine during

the nights there wasn't a full moon, in order not to blow her cover. This coverup started seeming more and more like a harsh challenge she never expected having needed to face. She then couldn't think clearly anymore once her structure started changing... Her gums bled because of how long ago this had happened and her body had never hurt as much as it did now. She snarled and yelled out the pain as it became harder to contain. The feline now understood why all the inmates wore thin and worthless cotton, as large gaps and tears evolved by her growth. The sound of tearing fabric sounded louder than it had to be, due to her hearing that was becoming more sensitive. Her upwelling headache made her feel as if a hurricane was bottled up inside her skull. She forced her eyes open despite the agony and could see her freakishly enlarging claws emerge themselves from the tips of her fingers, it being the last thing she could clearly see before her vision got wrapped in a reddish mist...

The blue feline beast cracked its eyes open once the pounding agony began to fade. It took a moment to inspect its ginormous body after going a long time since it had this form. Its mind was foggy, but pure rage like it normally had was nowhere to be found. The animal felt at peace for now since the two entities, who made up its headspace, had given each other their understanding. The beast in this form now

functioned as a well-balanced fusion of the two and all it simply was looking for now, was a bite to eat. It stretched its limbs and shook its wild fur before exiting the now narrow dorm, trying not to bump its head into anything. Once it was outside, it could feel the nighttime breeze blow through its fur, from the barred but open ceiling above the middle of the enclosure. Other silhouettes turned their heads upon noticing their new comrade and soft huffs could be heard from left and right. Beautiful black and dark brown pelts marked the shiny fur coats of the werewolves of this place. The beast felt uneasy as soon as it noticed its own blue pelt being unusual compared to them. But there wasn't a single sign of mistrust. Yet. The Lycans that wandered past gave subtle nods in peace, as they made their way to the pile. Each grabbed a large haunch of meat and were so used to these nights, it felt like a whole other place than the blue beast had expected. These wolves all seemed so... innocent for some reason. The blue feline sniffed its nose and followed the only small Lycan in this place. The smell... was so recognizable... Chase! It must've been Chase. The tiny Lycan was covered in a shiny, black coat that had grown in place of the shorter, white fur he had in his normal form. He recognized the big feline shortly after as well and barked. The beast tilted its head as it seemed like Chase was trying to tell it something, but it eventually became aware on

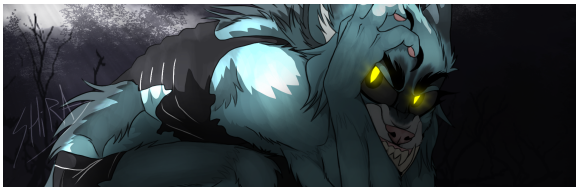
its own. The little Lycan pointed with his nose into the direction of the largest of the pack. The Lycan had the most muscular build and longest fangs compared to the others, but not as long as the blue feline's. The feline monster also seemed to be taller still, making it the largest creature in the enclosure. It was exactly what made the largest Lycan approach. He clearly felt intimidated. He bared his teeth once he got close and Chase backed away in fright, hiding behind the blue feline's legs who rose and lifted up its paws in order to stand bigger. Other Lycans who were standing around became aware of what was happening and all faced the blue beast's direction. It became clear the largest Lycan was their leader and the rule of the strongest remained. But the blue feline didn't want to be pack leader. If only there was an easier way to tell. The large wolf scoffed and spat on the floor in front of the feline before wandering off again as the others returned to what they were doing. The leader clearly refused to respect the feline beast, but allowed it to grab its food. Chase revealed himself from behind the feline and gave it a hopeful glare before both each grabbed a large chunk of meat.

The enclosure was anything except a luxury. The building had resemblance of a large prison except this one seemed to be designed especially for werewolves. Stone walls and metal bars marked the prison-ish part of the

asylum, and the food counters were simply the only thing making living in this place bearable. For Lycans then. The blue feline couldn't wish more to go home... But it knew it was going to be stuck here for the rest of its life... Right?

Chapter 6

6



"I'm n-not sure if I can take it to do this three nights every m-month..." Nicole spoke in mind as she tried to make as less noise as possible while crying. Once the night was over, she found herself back in her dark corner where she felt at least a little bit of shelter from the other silhouettes. She didn't dislike the Lycans, but simply didn't feel like she fit in. The evening before she thought it might've been doable, maintaining cover, surviving and all. But now she realized it's nothing for her. She couldn't even stop thinking about the time in the past she had been locked up before. Contained because no one knew how to help her. No one ever knew, no one ever could. Except her family. Those had been the most helpful along

with her former psychiatrist Erin, who she still misses to this day. Months went by since that disaster, where she had lost him and a piece of her own mind. Her hospital journey was hellish, but necessary. All the pain she had to endure in order to become stable again and she was far from done with that. She feels like the Aspira nurses simply put her here because they were afraid. "Fear does a lot with people," is what Erin once said. *What a wise man. May he rest in peace,* Nicole thought when her sobbing decreased. She had hoped for Furore to give an answer or sign, but it seemed to be totally quiet. It was fine to her. It refused to help her with maintaining her cover anyways, so what's the deal? For some reason her limbs didn't want to stop shaking and she thought it could be the aftermath of her transformed time. She shook her head. It didn't really matter, did it?

"Hey, are y-you okay?" Chase's voice surprised the crying Nicole who once again was found curled up in the corner. She quickly wiped away her tears and stood up, trying to mask her emotions up. "I-I'm alright," she said as a tremble accompanied her voice. Chase's ears twitched and turned as he tilted his head. His white, usual coat was visible on his body again and his singlet got torn up from the night before. "Are you sure?" he asked, his tail getting between his legs. "Yeah. It's... just a lot for me. This new place," Nicole answered. "I get it,"

Chase said, "I noticed I've quite much acted jolly when introducing you to this place, but the truth is... it ain't any fun. And I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong image."
"It's okay, it didn't really. I expected this place to function just like a prison and captivity for the rest of my life," Nicole spoke. "Well, if you ever need to talk, I'm here. Maybe I'm super young, but at least I know what goes on here," Chase offered. The blue feline gave a subtle smile for a second and the two sat down on a mattress. "Actually, there is something I'm curious about..." Nicole began. The little husky turned his head. "Yeah?"
"Well, how come you got sent to this place? You're clearly the youngest one here and you said you never knew your parents."
Chase's eyes became watery as he lowered his head in sorrow. "I was orphaned after my family was murdered..." he began, "you see, werewolves are some of the most misunderstood creatures to walk this planet and are being hunted. They're being killed for what they are, even if they've never raised their claws against anyone or anything..."
"Gosh- I'm... I'm sorry to hear that," the blue feline said as she carefully put a paw on his tiny shoulder, "you didn't deserve that happening to you."
"I do feel bad for you too. You said you were a mother, right? I can't imagine how much you must be missing your own family right now

too," Chase spoke with sniffles in between his speech. Nicole's ears lowered as she felt a lump form in her throat. "I do miss them. A lot."
"Why did you actually end up here, if I may ask? You don't really seem like... one of us. But don't take that the wrong way! You're just... bigger... and more cat-like."
"I'm not taking it the wrong way, sweetheart. It's complicated. But let's just say I've been sentenced because of others' fright. I was healing in a hospital before this, a psychiatric one, and I appeared to make so much progress at first..."
"And then what happened...?" Chase carefully asked. "A family member brought up some really bad memories... and I... lost it. I messed up and now am here," the blue feline answered. She looked away for a moment to grit her teeth.
"I'm sorry," Chase spoke softly. Nicole gave a reassuring nod with a subtle smile as she gently stroked the husky's back. "I might be different, but I do see we all are here for the same reason, Chase..."
"What's that?"
"Fear. Everyone's afraid of us because they do not understand us. How we're able to turn, why we are born with this curse or why it passes over. Everything that's unknown is... terrifying."
"That makes sense," Chase said while swinging his short legs over the mattress' border. "And... one more thing," Nicole spoke once she noticed the husky got up again. "Yes?" he asked while

turning around to face her. "The uhm... pack leader... Will he be cool with me?"
Chase's face froze for a moment as he was not sure what to say in that moment and turned his head to look at the other dorms. He noticed the leader being busy with handing out new singlets and sets of shorts for those who had severely torn out of their clothing, but nothing seemed to be off. The little husky turned his face back into Nicole's direction and shrugged. "He seems to be fine just now. Maybe you could talk to him?" Chase suggested, "he's only scary in his wolf form."
Nicole glanced at where the leader was handing out clothes and narrowed her eyes for a brief moment. She then nodded while looking into Chase's eyes again and began walking into the larger Lycan's direction.
The pack leader locked eye contact with Nicole as soon as she got near and an unfortunate frown appeared on his face, clearly having recognized her. "You're the new stud, aren't ya?" he spoke with a deep voice. The large Lycan had a mixed appearance, with short, gray fur marking his Pitbull origins and tufts of longer, black fur giving away his remained werewolf parts. His muscular build made him seem like a sporty type of guy, but it was clear those evolved from his wolfish side. "Yes, I am the new one," Nicole began after assuming she was probably older than the large Lycan, "nice to meet you."

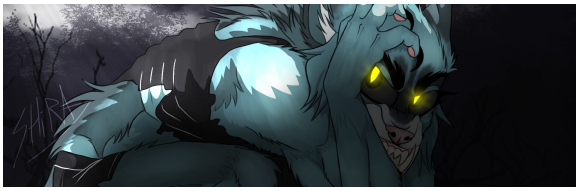
"I should've known that large blue coat belonged to you," he spoke with slight apathy. "I just want you to know I come in peace... I have no intention whatsoever to take your position away from you," she said, raising her paws up to chest height. The Lycan scoffed, "right, and how am I sure I can trust that? You know everyone's different when the round moon's out. Unless... you're not one of us."
He narrowed his eyes on that last sentence and put one of his paws on the pile of clothing he was carrying. "What are you *really*?" he growled, blocking the pile of clothes to prevent Nicole from potentially grabbing a pair. She sighed. "You're clearly letting your insecurities run over you. Aren't you one of the youngest here?" asked the blue feline with her arms crossed. The Lycan bared his canine teeth. "I'm twenty-five, miss. Definitely older than that twelve-year-old piece of junk you're hanging out with," he snarled. Nicole's brows lowered as somehow her motherly instincts told her to stand up for Chase. "Hey now, don't project your insecurity onto anyone else. How about you pick someone your own size?" she spoke with fury in her eyes. "I am NOT insecure," the Pitbull spoke while taking a large step forward. Nicole could feel his tensed-up aura as he now stood in her circle. She was shorter than him in their normal forms, but she couldn't care less about height. "That's something an insecure being would say," she added while turning her head away. The Lycan

grabbed her shoulder and gave it a pull towards him. "You look me in the eye when talking to me, alright?!" he snarled, "there's only one Alpha running this pack and that one's me, understood?!"
Nicole released herself from his grip and let out a hiss. "I just tried to explain I have no desire taking your leading spot from you! Simply can't stand when innocent children are being insulted."
"Fine. If that's your aim than you should focus on the bigger picture here."
"What do you mean with that?" she asked while being more at peace now. "Well, everyone is innocent here. Not a single crime record. No one."
"What? But why else does this place exist?"
"Everyone here got arrested as soon as they were caught being a Lycanthrope. Whoosh, gone. Just like that. Why do you think werewolves want to hide their identities?"
Nicole frowned when he said that. "Brutal," she muttered and the Lycan eventually handed her a new set of clothing. "Can I ask you... one more thing?" she added while turning around once more, before walking off. "Hm?" the Pitbull raised his head. "What's your name?"
"Everyone here knows me as Scarlord. Rather not leak my real name if I ever happen to face the miracle of getting out of here."
Nicole nodded, "cool, cool."
She then headed back to her dorm to speak to

Chase.

Chapter 7

7



"So, how'd it go?" Chase spoke with slight nervousness in his voice. "It's all fine, no worries," Nicole replied with a reassuring smile on her face, and she unfolded the singlet from the pair of clothing she got. "I can understand why he's assumed of being a scary guy. Wouldn't want to fight his wolf form for sure," she went on as she sat down on the nearest mattress. "He can be very mean, and despite the others having told me he's only acting such way to maintain his dominant posture it's never stopped keeping me at a distance," said Chase while leaning against the metal gate of the dorm. "Well, just know I got your back, Chase. I won't allow him, or anyone for that matter, poking fun at you or doing any harm," Nicole

said as soon as she stood up again. Walking towards her little corner, she faced the wall and quickly changed from her demolished pair into the new ones. "How kind that they at least provide new fabric after every night it gets torn," the feline began while turning around again, tossing her damaged clothing in the basket near the entrance of the dorm. "Yeah... it's really the least they can do," replied Chase. Nicole sighed, remembering how this place still remained a prison. She still couldn't handle the mystery surrounding the inmates being innocent, but she told herself she'd get back to that later. In this moment she only felt tired, exhausted from having spent the night trampling around in her beast form. "Say, little guy, would you mind if I took a nap? Catching my z's was a tad of a challenge," she spoke while trying to suppress a yawn. Chase nodded, "I don't mind at all. Have a good rest."

He left the dorm as soon as he finished saying those words, leaving Nicole surprised at how direct he was acting. *The poor thing must feel down because of the environment's true nature,* she thought to herself as she climbed onto one of the mattresses. The blanket was terribly torn and her muscles ached from the night before, but she desperately needed more hours of rest. She shut her eyes while trying to get at least a bit comfortable under what's left of that blanket and dwelled off sooner than she expected...

"I can't keep up with this!" Furore's voice sounded like an explosive echo inside Nicole's mind as soon as she woke up. *"Good night to you too,"* she spoke sarcastically in mind. She restlessly rubbed her eyes and stumbled upon a starry sky with a rising full moon. Another night, another dilemma. ***"I'm being serious! While you were out I've only been stressing about what to do next!"*** spoke Furore with clear anger in its voice. *"Well remaining calm as this body transforms for two more nights that is. You know it's our only choice and way to not get caught."*

"You don't unders-stand! This t-takes so much energy!"

"Energy? I thought you said you have zero influence on our physical system whatsoever anymore!"

"N-no, it's not that. It's about how hard it is to maintain enough sanity to function like a normal animal under these conditions. You see, that's why I went quiet last night... It got too much but I'm not sure if I can do it again..."

"Why does it matter? Everyone here turns feral and as long as all are established enough, nothing can go wrong, Furore."

"Oh well, we'll see about that then. But that's the last warning I'm giving you before you skip your medication another night."

"Understood. Now we better get going or we're getting mauled," Nicole spoke as she felt her

patience decrease. She didn't really understand what Furore was trying to say with 'maintaining sanity' but she felt as if she'd know more soon enough. For now her stress level was increasing to the same point as the night before, her heart pounding in her chest as she was about to endure the same agonizing changes...

The blue feline beast emerged from her corner as it exited the dorm to enter the main area again. Through the bars of the ceiling's opening the full moon could be seen risen up high, reflecting its full capacity of light. The moon seemed larger than the night before, but it could've been an illusion as well. This was the night the moon would be completely full but despite that, the day before and after maintained having the same effect for these Lycans. It had been proven it didn't count for all Lycan breeds, but Chase had informed Nicole that it did count for those who stayed here. The feline beast popped a stiff joint in its shoulders before continuing its pace. The night felt peaceful, with the same calm ambience as before. All Lycans knew what they were up to after grabbing a portion of food, like all the nights they endured before. It's something that the feline beast couldn't recognize; the feeling of control during all nights. All the wolves seemed to be so at peace, to a point where it was hard to remember they remained partly beasts. The blue feline was convinced none of

them ever even genuinely raised their claws against someone. It sniffed its nose and picked up the smell of freshly cut meat coming from the counter. Oddly enough, it felt a bit of distress running through it. It felt... hungrier than the night before. What could that mean? It felt like a sign of something that was definitely up, but it struggled with contemplating what the problem could be... A deep snarl suddenly caught its attention, startling it for a brief moment once it froze in the moonlight. Scarlord. The Lycan Alpha wandered over with lowered ears and exposed teeth, clearly expressing the same threatening aura as he had attempted before. But now it was his wolfish form to take the leading role on his shoulders. The blue feline monster's eyes met his' and the two kept staring at each other for seconds that felt like minutes. Once the blue mouser blinked, it turned its vision downwards at the ground and tried to avoid eye contact with the werewolf. He snarled once again when he noticed the feline looking away and slammed one of his paws into the ground. The feline's ears lowered further and it eventually exposed its fangs to let out a hiss, warning him to stop his act. The beast stood by its alibi to not take away the Lycan's leading role but the wolf seemed to struggle with either picking up or trusting the signals. The feline beast gave up once he snorted and walked away. At least he went away... Not so fortunate. The feline beast's

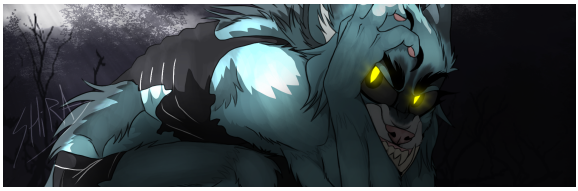
ears trembled when it picked up the sound of a cry. A whine, sounding like a dog which had someone step on its tail. A small canine... Chase! The blue feline shook its head and exposed its fangs again upon taking a sprint to the other side of the enclosure, in the shadows next to the concrete walls. The beast's eyes widened when it saw Scarlord violently digging his claws into the face of the small Lycan. ***But WHY?*** it thought to itself. It cracked its neck and took a leap forward, blocking the path in between Chase and Scarlord's bloody claws. The feline snarled as it stood still on all fours and the large Lycan did the same. It couldn't handle the way Scarlord dared to injure the poor little canine. Seemingly for no reason at all either. Was he really trying to provoke the feline beast? By attacking what he knew meant something to it? Chase was young and vulnerable. Also even if he didn't get along with Nicole in the way he did, she would still have stood up for him. He reminded her a lot of her own children, how much those undoubtedly mean to her. So Chase's injury definitely struck something sensitive... Scarlord let out a rough bark and sprinted towards the big feline, immediately locking his jaws around the larger shoulder of the beast. It roared it out in pain, so sudden and loud that the other Lycans backed away further. None of them seemed to have any intention to interfere nor were planning to. This clearly turned into a fight of who's the strongest and

Scarlord didn't hesitate making the first move. The feline beast felt its burning rage return as it scorched in its veins, spreading through its entire system and causing its muscles to tense up. It made a swing before wildly shaking its back to loosen Scarlord's bite and he flew a few feet backwards, landing on his paws once the feline released itself. His eyes widened in fury and began foaming slightly at his mouth, exposing his nature's real sickness. It's in that moment when the feline froze. Something clearly distracted it for a moment and the large Lycan went for another bite. Although this time the feline managed to catch his move and slashed its claws through the jaw of the werewolf, before taking a bite of its own, right into his neck. Scarlord screeched and showed weakness for the first time ever. The other Lycans felt nothing but fear run through them as they saw how their strongest comrade was getting owned. The feline kept biting harder and harder until bones began to crack. The red mist in front of its eyes intensified until it was barely able to recognize the silhouettes around it. The smell of blood. It was what had distracted it for that brief second, and now returned. Chase and Scarlord's blood. Blood of a carnivore. The beast was blinded as it felt how it started to lose control, bit by bit. Scarlord's shrieking didn't help with reversing the upwelling change of act either, as the beast felt its sanity decrease. Its claws were dug deeply

into the shoulders of the Lycan, its fangs sunken even deeper into his throat, and the wolf began to choke. Even his muscular structure wasn't a match for the strong jaws of the feline monster. The other Lycans began to panic, hearing the sounds of their dying leader. Even Chase couldn't bare it. They all couldn't believe that it was happening either. It's then where more Lycans began to doubt whether the blue feline was actually one of them. Chase hid himself as far away from the scene as possible and even pressed his ears against his head once Scarlord's shrieks turned into screams. The final punch was thrown when the feline tore a large piece of flesh from the werewolf's neck and swallowed it. Scarlord's now lifeless body hit the concrete floor and the formerly structured pack turned into pure chaos. Lycans ran towards the barred cell doors and fences, helplessly searching for a way out. They feared it for sure. After seeing what it was doing to their strongest comrade, none of them wished for the same fate. The beast panted as its maw and chest were covered in blood. Thick and sticky red essence. It felt like months ago. All that killing, feeding and hunting. It was something it hadn't felt in such a long time. Exactly that was the reason why the feline needed her medicine...

Chapter 8

8



Nicole yawned and muttered in agony as soon as she woke up. The atmosphere was cold and she immediately got caught off guard by the strong metallic smell of blood. Her entire figure was stained with it. She closed her eyes and wildly shook her head around a few times, helplessly hoping it was a fever dream. But it wasn't. She inaudibly cussed to herself while trying to wash the blood on her paws away. It was a disastrous look. Her attention then went to the new stack of clothing that laid beside the entrance of... a cell. It then hit her she had been put in another place as soon as she passed out last night. It clearly got too much for both her and Furore, and the masked guiders took their chance to separate her from the other Lycans.

She vaguely remembers the disaster from last night and feels stupid about it. Not that she really had any choice, but she never expected it to get out of hand as much as it did. She killed one, didn't she... She shook her head once more and got herself into a new pair of clothes. As soon as she had them on her, she felt her muscles cramp intensively and couldn't bare standing up any longer. The feline dropped to the concrete floor and caught herself with her paws, before trying to support her most aching shoulder. She then only realized how small the solitary confinement was she got put in. It all reminded her too much of the cells she had to spend time in ages ago... "Had a rough night?" a female voice spoke at the other side of the cell door. It caught Nicole off guard and she gasped. "W-who's there?!" she exclaimed with an attempt at sounding defensive. The locks on the door rattled as they got opened and it didn't take more than a few seconds until the feline could see the figure who the voice belonged to, standing in the doorstep. A slim figure wearing a black robe and the same mask she had seen at her arrival to this place. Nicole's eyes narrowed and she took a step back, feeling the fur on her back rise. "Fear not, inmate... I will not hurt you. Not the way you've severely harmed another last night," the masked figure spoke. "Then what are you going to do...?" Nicole spoke with a tremble in her voice. The figure made her way into the feline's enclosure and

shut the door behind her. She then kneeled down to the anguished cat's level and slowly started removing her mask. "I've got news for you," she said as she pulled the mask off her face. A shiny beak revealed itself from underneath and Nicole could see a coat of black feathers mark the female avian's face. A seemingly familiar face... "You've got... 'news'?" the cat spoke with doubt welling up in her head. The avian nodded and sat down on the concrete bench that was supposed to resemble Nicole's bed, crossing her legs in the process. "Listen, we normally aren't allowed to take off our masks in presence of any inmate, but it felt wrong not to. I've just been contacted by the hospital you were redirected from and they apparently had gotten a call from your family."
"Oh?" Nicole's tone didn't sound too genuine. "It appears a huge mistake had been made. You see, any spotted Lycan is immediately reported to us and arrested in order to be held captive. But turns out... you're not a lycanthrope at all."
"What a surprise," the feline spoke with a sarcastic and aggravated tone. She crossed her arms in annoyance as she sat on the concrete floor, not breaking eye contact with the avian. "Let's just say, you murdering and... well-feeding off one of our wolfish inmates has definitely proven that state. It just felt right to let you know that I am trying to get you out of here. Or, well... all of them out of here actually."
"Oh really? And how do I trust this isn't some

sort of trick to get inside my head?"
The avian sighed and lowered her hood, revealing she was a raven. Nicole tilted her head upon noticing this and her ears perched up. "Wait a minute," she mumbled. "I can prove it by telling you my name is Rocaah Warrington. The last name should be familiar with you," Rocaah responded. "I knew I recognized some of your features from somewhere," Nicole began before starting to stammer as she realized who she was dealing with, "I'm s-so sorry about Erin..."
"Knowing Erin he would've forgiven you as much as I'm trying to, Mrs. Watterson. You see, I still hold access to his files and former research, how much effort he put into trying to find the right way to guide you. So much dedication, it was unbelievable for anyone in his position."
"I indeed remember how much he had done for me. G-gosh I sure owe him... I owe him my life."
"Please, it's okay. Don't feel too torn up about it. You should just know that I'm currently busy with a plan myself. I'm trying to proceed with what he wanted to achieve since the start."
"W-which was?"
"He wanted to serve justice for any creature or patient that had suffered being wronged by their surroundings. Those who committed to things against their will. He wanted to stand up for them and give them what's right for them. The same he did for you..."

"H-how do you plan to do this though? It doesn't seem fair if you're working for an organization that literally captures innocent werewolves! None of those creatures in there murdered anyone!"
Rocaah bent a bit forward to further lock her eye contact with Nicole, lowering her volume when speaking up again. "It's exactly why I joined this place," she whispered, "now I haven't told anyone this, yet, but I'm working my way up to replace the owner of this wretched place and turn it all around for the better of the Lycans. To set them free again."
"I- I guess that's fair... Although, how are you sure I won't raise my claws against any other innocent beings again? You've seen what I did that that Lycan..."
Rocaah reached in one of her robe's pockets and revealed a tiny syringe with glowing red contents. "I found your medication that Aspira gave us when you arrived. There was a claim it wasn't effective but that's obviously untrue, knowing the labs it came from. Y'know, with me being familiar with Erin's work and such."
Nicole nodded and turned away for a moment, before looking the raven into her eyes again. "I trust you'll be just as consistent with taking in this stuff as you were before," Rocaah added.
"W-why are you willing to do this though? For such dangerous and bloodthirsty monsters like me."
"Because I know those monsters aren't actually

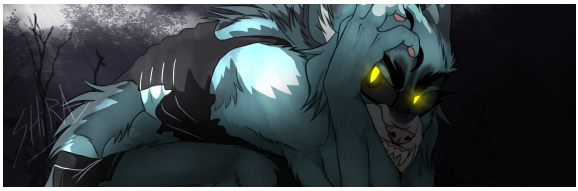
monsters at the inside. Like my brother believed, there's good in any creature to exist and it's not their fault for being born that way. It's not *your* fault you've been born that way, Mrs. Watterson."
Nicole shed a tear, thinking back about Erin, and gulped as she tried taking in those words. "It's not your fault either you murdered Scarlord last night," Rocaah continued, "it's just that there isn't any more luxury than these cells, but I'm promising you that you'll be out of here soon. And that the rest will follow you after. I'm only asking you to trust me. Could you do that?"
Nicole sniffled and nodded, her reddened eyes widening as she kept looking into Rocaah's. "I do feel guilty though. For all I did. To both Scarlord and my former fellow patients. If only I could see the last two again..." the feline spoke with grief in her voice. "Then know I'm hoping for you you'll find a way. At least I believe you will," Rocaah spoke softly. "Gosh- you remind me so much of Erin," Nicole said while wiping her tears away. Rocaah let out a subtle chuckle, "I get that a lot, heh."
The raven then gave Nicole a nod as she stood up and gently patted her on her back. "Before I go, if you need me," the raven spoke while quickly scribbling on a piece of paper and handing it to Nicole, "give me a call on this number. I'm pretty much available for most of the time, especially when I'm working nightshifts such as these." The blue feline

inspected the paper and turned to the raven again, giving her a nod as well. Rocaah then turned around and exited Nicole's confinement, leaving the feline on her own again.

It only took a few days until the feline's eventual release. Nicole couldn't bare looking Chase into the eye when she was being escorted out, as her time to return home came. She was able to feel thankful for Rocaah to have helped with her release, but guilt feeds her anxiety. Chase seemed like such a sweet fellow who found comfort with the blue feline, only to discover what truly lies behind her smile. Her smile full of teeth. Sharp teeth.

Chapter 9

9



It's been almost a month since I left the lycanthrope confinement. It were only a few days, but those were long enough for me to hate the place and I was glad to finally be back home again. The Aspira Hospital apologized for the drastic actions they had taken when I had my beginning episode, yet they saw I was strong and capable enough to take care of myself all along. I could only appreciate the support they had tried to give me during the start of my recovery journey, but really wanted to embrace trying it alone now. After all, I could finally be reunited with my family after all this time and properly get my swing back ever since I spent time in the forest. I did take my diary with me. I've discovered it's rather comforting to be able to just write everything

down. My main objective remained gaining back some stability and since home was the only place I could truly be myself, I was ready to face the challenge. I'm writing this as I made my way back from the grocery store for a quick browsing, surprised I still had it in me to drive after all those months of not touching the steering wheel. I forgot how good it felt to be able to run chores just fine. I think I'm ready to become the person I used to be before. Or maybe... even better than that. I'm glaring at the chairs next to me in the dining room, as I'm sitting at the table. My husband surprised me with his cooking once again tonight and the whole time I rested on the couch today, my kids didn't leave my side. It was obvious they all missed me lots. Getting visits here and there could never match being at home with them. I even heard back from Joanna; an actual apology got out of her mouth and I could only accept the situation for how it was. It just reminded me of the fact I also heard from Lyaa and Shalon. I really feared they wouldn't want to speak to me ever again, after what happened. But they seemed to be way more understanding that I expected. They were both on the line from Aspira's visitors number and apparently managed to get mine. It was a delightful conversation really. They only seemed to really care about how I was doing and the rest didn't matter. I even ask myself if I was lucky to have met them. To not have been fully alone during this time away from home. All there's left to say is I'm grateful it went this way and everything

could've been way worse than it turned out to be. But this paragraph is getting long now and I'm running out of pages, so I'm calling it quits for now.

Nicole put down her pen as soon as she finished writing in her diary. Her phone vibrated immediately after and she grabbed it to take a look. Surprisingly enough, it was a text message from Judith. Nicole's eyes widened as she couldn't believe it. For a long time she feared having lost contact with everyone who cared about her outside her family.

"Hi Nic, I heard you were back home since a while ago and figured to check up on you. Perhaps you'd like to meet up sometime to catch up? If not, that's completely alright."

The blue feline grabbed onto her phone with both paws to type a response. Still a bit caught off guard, she tried to embrace the kind offer from the shelled fairy.

"Sure, I'd love to. It's been a while. If you have no further plans tonight, I'd love to go out for a drink. Just let me know."

Nicole glanced one more time at her screen when she received a confirmation from Judith. The feline even started feeling less gloomy and a subtle smile appeared on her face. She

scrolled through their message history and seeing all the previous times the fairy checked in to ask how she's doing makes Nicole remember how good of a friend Judith always had been to her. Despite the feline's differences with Patrick, Judith never let go of the fact Nicole isn't a bad person, and that's something she shouldn't forget. "What's making you smile like that?" Richard spoke with a chuckle as soon as he came down the stairs. The blue cat hadn't even noticed him and her ears twitched as she didn't expect him to speak up behind her either. Turning her head, she gave him a peck on the cheek and let out a chuckle herself. "Oh, it's Judith," she spoke, "she offered to hang out as she was checking up on me." The pink bunny smiled, "that's very sweet of her. I told you there's nothing to worry about regarding your friends, true ones will stick no matter what."
"I know... I think negative thoughts just got the best of me," Nicole spoke as she turned her head away with a slightly grim expression. The tall leporid put his paw on his wife's shoulder and pressed his nose against her cheek. "Hey, it's gonna be alright in the end. Just try to see this as another step taken towards improvement." Nicole nodded once he spoke those words and leaned with her head against his side. "At what time have you scheduled to meet up with her?" Richard asked. "In about an hour or so. The café is at the other side of town though, so it's a twenty-minute drive," the feline responded.

The pink bunny nodded and gave a brief smile. "You gonna be alright?"
"Yeah, I will be. You'll be hearing from me if that isn't the case," Nicole answered.
The evening was as peaceful as it could get once Nicole got herself on the road. There weren't many people around and the feline found some rest behind the wheel. Yet she still took every turn very cautiously, still feeling some nerves here and there. She luckily remembered the directions and managed to drive all the way without any trouble. Locking her car, she got out after parking it near the entrance of the café. It was a small but cozy boulevard near the southern border of Elmore, with only a few fashion stores lined up and one restaurant besides the café. Nicole stopped in her tracks to look at a black dress that was put under spotlights in one of the fashion stores. It reminded her of her teenage goth phase and how she didn't completely lose interest in wearing stuff like that. If only she had more time and energy... *Oh well, my days aren't numbered now, so an opportunity will come someday,* she thought to herself and she picked up her pace towards the café. Entering it, she immediately spotted a smiling Judith waving at her once she noticed her too. The blue feline made her way to the table next to the window where she was sitting and sat down. "Hey Nic, I'm so glad you managed to come!" Judith said. "Well, I just appreciate it a lot that you've

offered this," Nicole responded as she put her purse next to her chair. "How was your day?" the shelled fairy asked. "Oh, it was alright. Mainly ran a few errands while still taking it easy, y'know," the blue feline answered. "I'm glad you're taking it easy," Judith said, "it can't be easy dealing with all this." Nicole nodded subtly as she rested her eyes on Judith's antlers. "How'd you get your antlers so shiny? Gosh, they look wonderful, Judith!" Nicole exclaimed with a broad smile. "Ahw, thanks! Haven't done anything special though..." the shelled fairy smiled, before realizing what was going on, "But hey, don't avoid the subject, sweetheart. Know I mean it when I say I'm glad to see you. No matter what happened." Nicole's ears lowered as she tried to look away for a second. "I know, and I'm sorry... I'm not really used to embracing contact after incidents."

"It's okay, hun. But I'm here for you and always open to listen to whatever bothers you," said Judith as she folded one leg over the other. "I'm glad," Nicole tried to sound as genuine as she could. The shelled fairy reached out to put her hand on the feline's arm that rested on the table, saying "I also do not want you to tear yourself up like you've already done." Nicole felt a lump forming in her throat as she looked away from the fairy, her vision becoming blurry by upwelling tears. She quickly shook it off and wiped her eyes dry before any tears could even flow. She didn't know what to say in response

and let her face do the talking, by giving Judith a smile. The two briefly got interrupted by a waiter taking their order and a moment of silence followed while they waited for their drinks. Judith decided to break the ice after a few minutes, "you're actually holding off the alcohol, aren't you?"
"Heh, yeah... I figured it was the right thing to do," Nicole responded. "It's okay, you know. Don't feel forced to pick up habits too soon," Judith said. "I just wanted to avoid going down a pathway of unhealthy coping mechanisms again. I've never really been a huge drinker, fortunately, but I've coped in various other ways I rather not bring up."
"I totally understand. I do not want you to relive those memories though. But all I want to say is, I'm proud of you for how far you've come."
"Heh, thank you. That... means a lot," the blue feline spoke, right before their drinks were being set on the table. Judith immediately took a sip of her red wine and Nicole glanced at her soda. "So, what have you been up to lately?" she continued. "Me? Oh, it's been peaceful. We went on a few vacations together as a family to take a break from all the events and Penny especially showed a lot of progress," Judith said.
"I'm glad to hear that. I'm also thankful of you guys for giving me another chance," Nicole added. "But of course. I knew from the start your condition was the cause of it all and that you never had any bad intentions with it either.

Gotta admit it's been hard to understand it, but we did our best."
"You sure did. Lots more than most people did." Nicole smiled and took a sip.

The evening went on as the shelled fairy and blue feline talked. Despite the rough start their conversation had, they soon after didn't have any trouble at all and it felt like years ago to them. Finishing up their second drink, it didn't take long until they planned to call it a day. But shortly beforehand, things simultaneously began to get uneasy... "You feeling alright, Nicole?" Judith asked after she paid for the drinks. Nicole tried to ignore the upwelling dizziness and shook her head for a second. "I'm fine, just a little dizzy. Why do you ask?" Judith's expression was full of fright, something Nicole didn't expect in this moment. The shelled fairy pointed at the bathroom, signaling her to check the mirror and it got Nicole to raise her brow. The feline looked a few times over her shoulder at the frozen fairy, before entering the bathroom and rushing to the mirror. Her paws cramped up a bit as she rested them on the sink, feeling the fur on her back rise from what she saw. To her horror, her pupils were narrowed to slits and glowing yellow... with rather odd black irises and gray sclerae surrounding them. The feline gasped and frantically reached for her purse that luckily was already wrapped around her shoulder as she was about to leave. Opening

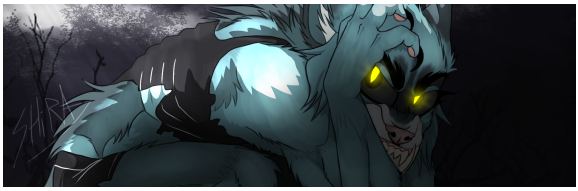
it up, she stressfully grabbed a new red syringe and ripped its package. While taking deep breaths, she focused on the needle and tested if the fluid was coming out in the air, before immediately applying it on her wrist and attempting to push the needle into her artery. But as if the situation couldn't get any worse, the needle snapped in half as soon as she applied pressure on her skin. Her breathing became heavier and she grabbed a second syringe as quickly as she could. This one snapped as well and Nicole didn't understand what was going on. She started freaking out while picking up the pieces of needle from the floor and disposing them in he trash. Having no other choice, she rushed back into the café and kept her head low, as if that would spark less attention towards her changed eyes. "I- I gotta head home," Nicole spoke with a tremble in her voice. "Will you be okay?" Judith asked while trying to hide her fear. "I will be, I will be... Just trust me on this one." Judith nodded and couldn't stop staring at Nicole's pupils until the feline made her way to the outside patio. Seeing no one was sitting outside, she dropped her purse on the ground and held her head. "Fuuuck..." she whispered under her breath, sitting down on the low, concrete wall. She continued holding her head and hiding her face for minutes, feeling how her breathing became more and more restless. She dug with one of her feetpaws in the pebbles and each of her muscles

tensed itself one by one. What she didn't notice was how parts of her fur coat were starting to change color and becoming longer. Longer, rougher, gray fur formed patterns on her cornflower blue shade. It was a rather unusual sight, since it didn't look like the Upper Limit's casual coat it was turning into. Her stress began to increase further, until nothing else but subtle chuckles got released from her mouth. She moved her paws away, revealing how the fur on her face was changing as well. The spaces between her brows and eyes turned completely gray, and two gray dots above them formed a new pattern on her facial fur. Her ears were slowly starting to become longer and thinner as well, with darker gray tips evolving on them. As cherry on top of a doomed cake, her uniform began getting a bit tight on her and this was the last drop for her to start panicking. Well, a weird type of panicking, as her chuckling didn't stop. She felt something wet drip from her nose and after wiping it away from her muzzle, the blood on her paw gave away it was the result of a bloody nose. But that damned smile wouldn't leave her face at any second now and she licked her paw clean, before getting up and grabbing her purse to make her way home. Nicole didn't know what was going on or what was or wasn't supposed to happen at this point, but her only goal for now was to reach her car. Dropping her purse on the backseat, she closed the door and settled behind the wheel. Looking into the

rearview mirror, she noticed she no longer was smiling, and her bloody nose was as good as gone. She turned the key to start the engine but hesitated a little to drive away. Was she really ready to drive in this condition? Lowering her head a bit, she stared out of the window and looked at the dark, cloudy sky for a moment. *It will only get later otherwise,* she thought to herself and released her brake…

Chapter 10

10



Nicole was caught off guard once she stopped the car at the side of the forest on her way home. Not because the Forest of Doom carried some of her bad memories and she hadn't come near it for a while, but she was caught off guard by the very wolfish figure sitting next to the road. Once the blue feline closed the car door after getting out, she crouched while narrowing her eyes as the figure's scent was familiar. It was small and its round, beaded eyes became visible when she came closer. "Chase?" she spoke in a half-whisper. Chase let out a happy bark as soon as he recognized her as well. Despite all that happened, he seemed more at peace than expected. But Nicole couldn't think about it too much. She was glad enough to see

him again at least. The fact he got to step foot outside the asylum proved Rocaah's work had started paying off. No matter how glad Nicole was about that, it suddenly all became a bit too much for her to handle, so she decided to just let it all flow through her and stay in the moment. Chase spun around in a few circles in front of her and everything seemed as if it was played in slow-motion. Nicole smelled the pines from the forest, felt the grass underneath her feetpaws and closed her eyes for a moment. Chase wanted to approach her to greet her properly, but she suddenly stopped him while she began holding her head again. "I'm sorry, Chase. But this is the worst timing ever for us to run into each other!" The little Lycan tilted his head in confusion and whined briefly. Nicole then abruptly grabbed onto her left shoulder as it started burning without warning. Above all, a bright full moon revealed itself in all its glory as clouds moved away in the sky, and the silhouettes of the two mammals were sharpened by the light. Frantically tearing off the sleeve of her already tight shirt, Nicole inspected the scar that was hurting so badly out of a sudden. Scarlord's bite wound... It then hit her, and before she was able to get any words out, she dropped to the mossy ground and her uniform began tearing in its traditional way. Frantic screaming from Furore echoed in her mind as the entity apparently was suffering the same agony as her. She knew it had to do with

her condition's nature not going well with the infectious Lycanthropy curse and feared the worst. However, there was no time to fear, and her gums began bleeding again. It had been a long time since she endured a transformation in this fashion, with her nerves feeling as if scissors were snipping them. Her groaning turned into yelling and despite Chase being used to the concept that surrounded a Lycanthrope's transformation, it brought up fear in him as he never had witness anything such as this before. Nicole's fur became even more gray, and her overall appearance turned rather wolfish. Her long tail replaced itself with a thicker, fuzzier one and her ears pointed themselves further, along with her snout morphing into a longer muzzle. Rough and sturdy black claws emerged from her paws instead of her white, thinner ones and her bottom canines grew longer than the upper pair. It was an unusual sight. Not even a bit of the Upper Limit could be recognized anymore. Or any bit of her in that case. The seemingly ginormous werewolf became even too large for its uniform and only the black boxers and tank top that were worn underneath managed to stay on. Despite the skinnier build of the Lycan compared to the Upper Limit's, this wolf beast still proved a lot of its strength when it slashed its paws through the nearest log. Everything happened too fast as Chase felt the need to run and hide as soon as the monstrous Lycan

focused its sight on him. Feeling unsafe, the tiny Lycan let out a panicked bark and started sprinting in the opposite direction as fast as he could. Not looking behind him, unable to notice the beast having given into the chase, he only wanted to get away as far as he could. He took lots of turns, trying to shake the beast off, but its above-supernatural power gave it the ability to follow closely behind. Chase started running out of options quickly, but a light in the distance gave him slight hope. Hoping to stumble across another being that was making its way through this dark forest that could serve as a distraction, the small Lycan increased his speed on all fours and ran until his legs gave up. But to his unfortunate surprise, he only stumbled upon a farm at the other side of the forest, which made him realize he took too many turns and ended up at the border again. With dragging steps due to exhaustion that could not be topped, Chase pulled himself through the leaves until he was able to hide behind a large crate next to the farm's stables and hoped to be safer there at least. Once he heard the wolfish monster gaining up on his track, he tried his best to hold his breath until the heavy footsteps faded away. The small Lycan then took his chance to get a peek and carefully moved his snout from behind the crate, inspecting the tons of dark trees ahead of him. The very moment when he expected to have lost the beast, another disaster was right

around the corner as the alarmed screams of chickens could be heard. Chase got back on all fours and took a sprint towards the sound to investigate, already expecting what was going on. The beast clearly found distraction with the powerless sheep and chickens that were formerly resting in these stables, and they now fearfully kept their eyes on the monstrous wolf. Chase wasn't sure of what to do, but knew for sure he didn't want Nicole to get in any more trouble than she already was and made a move without thinking. Before the ferocious Lycan could injure more of the baaing sheep after forcefully having torn open the gate, Chase took a high leap and landed right onto the monster's neck, immediately digging his little teeth into the fur. The large Lycan let out an aggravated snarl and tried to shake the little werewolf off it, no longer paying attention to the terrified sheep that managed to escape. Chase bit as hard as he could, since the monstrous wolf's coat was stronger than he expected it to be and it soon resorted to digging its large claws into the little Lycan. Chase let out pained whines and howls, accepting the fact he was no match for the beast at all, and slowly let go of it. He jumped off and made sure to land on all his four paws before sprinting off, hoping the beast would follow him. And so it did, leaving behind the farm before all could've gotten way worse. Despite a few sheep having gotten entirely or partially mauled, most of the animals remained intact

and were now making their way to the fields, unmonitored. But it's nothing Chase could worry about right now. He only focused on preventing the large Lycan from going on an actual rampage...

It was close to morning when Nicole made her way home. She had no clue of how she possibly managed to drive like she did under the circumstances. All she can remember is having spotted Chase at some point during her journey back and it having gotten interrupted by her newfound curse, only to have awakened again while lying on the mossy ground of the forest. She could only conclude having passed out again once stumbling upon tons of missed calls from her husband on her phone. Chase was nowhere to be found after that point and she could only hope he had gotten home safely. The blue feline felt drained by her aching head and lack of sleep when powerlessly turning the key to make her way inside. She felt great to be home again, but restlessness caused her not being able to enjoy anything at the moment. Wanting to freshen herself up a little, she inspected herself in the bathroom mirror, only to get started by the sheep's blood that stained her snout and neck. She only just now noticed how she wasn't wearing her uniform any longer either, being surprised by the fact she didn't feel cold at all for only wearing her tank top and boxers. They were terribly torn too... *Another*

curse, goshdarnit! She held her head tightly for a moment, attempting to process all that had occurred to her. Luckily not having left her purse behind, she grabbed it from the living room and rummaged through it as she searched for her phone. Not paying attention to how tired she was currently feeling, she scrolled through her contacts list and stopped once finding Rocaah's number she had saved a while ago. Feeling the need to take immediate action before her family would wake up, she immediately rang the number. "Rocaah Warrington, who am I speaking with?" Rocaah's familiar voice spoke at the other side of the line, only a few seconds after the feline started the call. "Hey, it's me... from the asylum," Nicole responded while suppressing a yawn. "Nicole? What a surprise, I didn't expect your call!"
"I honestly didn't either, not in a rude way of course."
"No, no, I totally get it. What is it that you're calling for? The recent news perhaps?"
"What news?"
"You haven't heard? Well, I promised you I was busy working my way up in this facility and guess what. The entire asylum has turned into a sanctuary instead!"
"That's... great! Honestly though, I am glad this has been changed. That must've been the reason why I stumbled upon Chase tonight..."
"You've seen him? That means those Lycans are making good use of their preserved time they

get to spend in the Forest of Doom."
"Again, that's great! Although, speaking of which... that's not in fact why I'm calling actually," Nicole spoke with a tremble in her voice. "What's the matter?" asked Rocaah, feeling her spark disappear as much as Nicole's.
"I need to know if there's a cure for Lycanthropy..."
"A cure...? I- I mean it depends on what type of Lycanthropy case we're speaking about. I even thought you weren't-"
"A werewolf? No, I am not. Well, I'm not supposed to be. You see, it seems like one of the former inmates bit me and the disease is not mixing well with my already supernatural condition."
"Oh gosh... And I assume you'll be needing a solution as soon as possible?"
"Yes, if there's any really. I figured you might know more since you've elaborated quite on Erin's research and worked at the former asylum itself."
"I might know something that could help, since this is a case of the infectious variant of Lycanthropy. It's different than the incurable kind that other Lycans are born with."
"I see. What do I owe you?"
"Nothing, truly. See this as my way to assist someone who has been wronged too many times before and I just want to make things right. For everybody."
"I... I appreciate it, lots," the blue feline

responded as she settled on the couch. "Meet me at the station in two hours and I'll be able to give it to you personally," said Rocaah with lots of faith in her voice. "Will do, and thanks so much," responded Nicole before the raven hung up. *Better get going soon, sleep can come later*, Nicole thought to herself.

Nicole knew it wasn't that long of drive to the station, so she planned to stop by elsewhere first before meeting up with Rocaah. She quickly washed her face clean with cold water to get rid of the blood and to keep herself awake in the process, then got herself into a new pair of clothing. She picked up her keys in the living room and stood still next to the bedroom door for a moment. Looking around as if someone was behind her, she slowly and carefully opened the door to peek inside. Richard was sleeping peacefully, yet... looked restless at the same time, due to him fearing his wife had gotten into trouble again. It felt the same as months ago... Where she was out during the night enduring more than she could handle and unable to find comfort with those she loves most. *When will this cycle end*... she thought to herself as she closed the door. She never stopped feeling guilty for everything she had caused after all. Yet a part of her knew that it had always been out of her control. She did wish she tried her best more though, since she didn't feel like she dealt with all that came towards

her in the right way. And the only person that was able to fully help her was gone now. Forever. She shook her head and felt her nose twitch for a second, then put her purse around her shoulder and left the house. It was 5 AM when she checked the dashboard of the car, after getting in. She turned on the headlights, but waited for a moment before starting the engine. Since it was still winter, despite it coming to an end soon, it remained cold and dark at this hour. She couldn't fully wrap her head around focusing another time to drive and even felt some upwelling anxiety disturbing her. The feline angrily shook it off and turned the key anyway, taking a deep breath before pushing the pedal. *It should be fine. Who's possibly on the street so early? Well, me then.* Making her way to the station that was nearby the shopping center, she made a pitstop before continuing. Noticing that the hardware store hadn't opened yet, she took her time to walk past the night shops that were closing for the day. With the last few steps she took, she felt her power disappear as quick as a brick downed in a pond and knew she had to find a way to awaken herself again. Luckily for her, a vending machine in front of the store's entrance hadn't run out of energy drinks yet and she took her chance. She drank the can empty as if her life depended on it and leaned with her back against the wall to wait for the store to open. She knew it always opens at six, so it wasn't a big deal to

wait. The blue cat was glad about having brought her winter coat though, since the wind blowing through the front part of the mall made the atmosphere even colder than it already was. That typical type of cold before the sun comes up. Her tail waved slowly with the wind and she put on her coat's hood to stay warm. There was no one to be found in the mall, how peaceful yet eerie that felt. But Nicole was able to enjoy it. It was rest she missed out on for a while and she really wished there weren't so many hectic things happening in her life as they were. But she knew she didn't have a say in that and decided to just deal with it. Her shadow from the artificial light was starting to become a bit duller as the lights in the hardware store switched on all at once. Nicole grabbed her phone from her pocket and checked the time. *5.50, perfect*. She also felt the energy drink kicking in as her eyelids no longer felt heavy and began approaching the store. Larry couldn't believe his eyes when he spotted the Watterson mother at the entrance when he opened it up. She gave him an awkward smile, knowing the sight was unexpected. "Good morning! Didn't expect you to come here this... early," Larry spoke with a chuckle. "Yeah well, there's gotta be a first time to anything, right?" responded Nicole after entering the store. "What's the occasion, if I may ask?" he said while being careful, knowing who he was talking to. The feline stopped in the first aisle to give him a

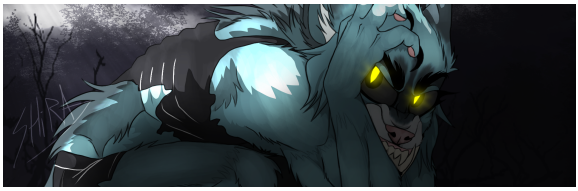
response, "long story, Larry. I'd rather save you from it all."
"Well, please let me know if there's anything I can help with," offered Larry as he began to log on the register. Nicole simply showed him her thumbs up and continued her search. It was a long time ago since she bought something from this store, or any hardware store overall. Usually it was Richard who bought supplies whenever they were needed, no matter how much that wasn't his cup of tea. Nicole didn't mind shopping for anything at all, but simply didn't have the time when she was working full-time. Now she's still on a recovery break, it feels like she has all the time in the world. But also... no time at all. She frowned while thinking about this and tried to focus on what she originally came here for. It was a little less than an hour left until she'd meet up with Rocaah, so she figured to better get moving. Searching through all the sections, she stopped where ropes and chains were being sold. Chains. That's what she was here for. The thought of needing them freaked her out, but she knew she couldn't take any risks. Not knowing if her werewolf form was able to break free from them like the Upper Limit managed before, she decided to settle for the most reckless option. Silver chains. She took a hard look at the plastic sprocket that had the chain rolled up on it and slowly reached out her paws to grab the amount she needed. But once her fingers barely even

touched the metal, she felt it burn as if she just placed her bare paws on a hot stove. She let out a scream and immediately let go of the chain while taking a quick step back. The fur on her back had risen within seconds and she noticed how the skin under the fur of her paws turned red. Her plan was foolproof. Almost, then. Larry undoubtedly picked up Nicole's alarmed screaming and sprinted into the aisle as fast as he could, having the same distraught expression as her. "You alright?!" he exclaimed while not paying attention to how Nicole quickly hid her paws behind her back. She gritted her teeth and tried to think of an excuse. "I- I just... think I grabbed the sprocket the wrong way."
"Are you sure? They're made out of sanded plastic," he responded with confusion in his voice. Nicole sighed and felt dumb for not having thought this through. What did she think was gonna happen? "I... uh- I just really don't know. To be completely honest with you, I've had a very rough night and am only in the store this early because it's an emergency. I can't explain it further, but I could really use some help." Larry nodded after she spoke those words and now noticed how she was hiding her paws. "Did you hurt yourself badly? Could I take a look?" he asked. Nicole frantically shook her head in the wave of anxiety that had made a return. "It's fine, it's fine! I'll be okay!"
"Alright. Now, how much do you need? I'll cut it for you," spoke Larry as he grabbed the cutting

pliers that hung next to the sprockets. "Uh... About two hundred inches," she responded. The clerk nodded and carried the large piece of chain to the register after cutting it. She followed his footsteps and went through her purse once reaching the checkout, attempting to hide how much her paws were still hurting. She paid for the chain and carried it in a thick, plastic bag to prevent herself from burning even more. Greeting Larry as she went out, she made her way back to the car and drove off after putting the bag on the backseat. She felt glad about having drank that energy drink when she felt that her focus made a return. Although she knew the effects could also wear off quickly and heavily, she had to hurry even more now.

Chapter 11

11



Nicole was right on time when she stopped the car near the entrance of the station and got out once she spotted Rocaah in her headlights. It was still dark and the feline was glad about the fact it had been cloudy for most of the night, considering it was the first of the three full moon nights she would have had to endure. Once the car's lights turned off, Rocaah's dark figure completely mixed with the surroundings that had almost the same color as her feathers. Nicole's eyes needed a slight bit of time to get used to the complete darkness again and she approached the raven, whose silhouette was now dimly shined on by the station's lights. "I'm glad you were able to come to quickly!" exclaimed Nicole while standing in front of the

black avian. "Trust me, it's no problem at all," she responded with a slight smile on her beak. Her expression then turned to serious within seconds. "Listen," she continued, "we don't have much time since this stuff needs hours of time to kick in, right before the next full moon."
"What is it?" asked the feline as soon as Rocaah revealed two shiny vials from her pocket. "It's the only serum that has been proven to work against the infectious Lycanthropy virus. You'll have to take a shot twice; one now and the other a little while after, let's say when you're back home."
"How do I know if it worked?"
"It should be strong enough to eliminate all microorganisms that are causing this curse, thus working as antidote. You'll know for sure when your weakness to silver has disappeared and the next, last transformation gets reversed," spoke Rocaah and she handed over the vials to Nicole. The blue feline stared at the glass containers for a few seconds once she got them in her paws. The essence was clear and looked a bit like sparkling water, but somehow thicker. "Has it... actually been used before?" Nicole asked as she began feeling a bit of skepticism. Rocaah didn't seem to be bothered by the amount of questions the feline was asking, but did understand why she would be so unsure about it. "It has been used before, yes," the raven responded, "in fact, I even managed to cure a few Lycanthropes that got infected the

same way you did. Those were the only souls before you that I was able to release from the asylum..."
"I see. Well, I can't thank you enough for your help anyways and will be trying this out," said Nicole, feeling a little more reassured now. Rocaah nodded. "Hopefully I won't see you again, with which I mean you won't be needing my help anymore in a complicated situation such as this," the avian said. "I get what you mean," responded Nicole with a slight smile, "I can only hope for the best."
"That's the spirit," said Rocaah before their conversation ended. Nicole thankfully greeted her another time and returned to her car. Sitting down, she immediately took in the first shot of the serum like Rocaah advised her to, and started making her way back home.

"***You're fucking KILLING ME!***" Furore seemed anything but at ease once Nicole got back. She didn't expect it would speak up so abruptly either, after a long while of silence. *"Wow, someone's awake."*
"***What did you expect?! It's not MY fault I got drained in the worst way by this second curse!***"
"Well it isn't my fault either, Furore! I thought you quitted blaming everything on me like you used to do!"
"***I thought so too. I'm sorry... This is just all a lot for me to handle and I still haven't healed well from those times you forced out a***

transformation in that wretched place."
"Then I am sorry too. I know we're in a huge mess again right now, but I promise you we'll get through this. I picked up some antidote that should help us become the old ones again."
Furore's voice sounded like a sigh the next moment and Nicole sat down on the couch while communicating with it. "***I just hope you're right about it being something effective, because I can't take this much longer. You probably don't either, but I should really inform you of the fact I'm on the edge here!***" it said. *"I get it. But this is all I can do for now. Please... try to hold on for a little longer and this should be over soon,"* she responded. "***Ugh, fine. I have nothing else to add anyways, besides the fact I'm not getting enough of that healing journey that you promised.***"
"Give me a chance, Furore."
"***Fine.***"
The beast went quiet as quickly as it started speaking and Nicole took her opportunity to take in the second shot. Besides, her body couldn't find any better timing to collapse as in this moment and she lied down on the couch to finally catch her rest.

"Mom, where have you been?!" Anais' frantic screaming immediately awakened Nicole in the most possible restless manner and she gasped for air when sitting up straight on the couch. She took a moment to catch her breath while

looking each of her three children in the eye that were standing next to her with heavily concerned expressions on their faces. Darwin didn't hesitate reaching out his fins to wrap them around his adoptive mother as he was the most worried of the three, despite Anais' alarmed remark. "What... what happened?" asked Gumball carefully when he came a bit closer. The tall blue feline rubbed her eyes and noticed her husband standing behind the kids as well, looking just as worried. "It's a complicated story," she replied before getting up. She stood up too quickly for her legs to handle and sidestepped for a second to get her balance back. She then checked the time on the clock in the dining room, only for her to notice how the sun had gone down already, and panic struck her. "I- I'll catch you guys up on it later, but for now I'm running out of time!" she exclaimed and wanted to sprint away, but got stopped by Richard grabbing her wrist. "Wait- not so fast, honey!" he spoke as he frowned a bit. She turned around to face him with widened eyes in terror, but also knew she owed him an explanation. "Please, at least explain a bit of what's going on. You don't think we're gonna let you face all of your troubles alone like you used to, right?" the pink leporid said while now having gently placed his paws on her trembling shoulders in attempt of calming her down. Her ears flattened further to the back of her head and tears began emerging in her eyes. It simply

starting becoming too much for her to handle and she didn't know how to get the proper words out. "I- I'm sorry. I know, I know I've made a p-promise to come clean e-earlier about stuff that bothers me and such- but right now... it's just too complicated!"
"I understand, sweetie. But at least give us one thing we can help you with... Please. You don't have to face everything alone anymore." As Richard spoke those words, the three kids had gathered around them and each stared at their mother with pleading eyes. "Alright..." Nicole spoke with a tremble in her voice, knowing well it was the right thing to do to take her family's advice. "I'm gonna need a bit of help right now actually..."
"Anything, honey," said Richard as he slowly removed his paws from her figure again. She quickly grabbed the plastic bag from next to the couch and held it up for him to see, asking "have you ever chained up a rabid dog before?"
"So let me get this straight, you've gotten bitten by another inmate at the asylum you weren't meant to be sent to, met Erin's sister who was trying to free them all along and received an antidote for it immediately?" asked Richard right after he just told the kids to stay in their room. Nicole could barely stand the agony she started being in, but still forcefully nodded. It was below their bedroom window where she chained herself up with the help of her husband, the area where the most moonlight

could be reflected into. Nicole had listened carefully to the instructions Rocaah gave her and absolutely wanted to be sure of this plan working out. It was a sight hard to bear for Richard, since his wife was obviously in a lot of pain because of the burning chains and he felt his stress increase once seeing the red marks evolving on her soft fur coat. It wasn't long until that coat would shift into something darker and way more ragged. "A-are you sure this is the right way to do it? Are those chains really necessary?" Richard asked as he stayed kneeled down on the floor, next to Nicole who sat below the window with her back faced towards it and chains wrapped around each of her arms and chest. She grunted and sniffed a few times with her eyes closed, unable to think clearly at the moment. "I-it's for s-safety... Can't- risk- a thing..." she groaned while gritting her teeth. "You took both shots, right?!" checked the pink bunny as he gently placed his paw on her back. She nodded another time in the same painful way, soon running out of energy to even speak. It was like torture for the both of them. With him struggling with having to see her like this another time. A good reason why neither of them wanted the kids to witness it. Despite how well Nicole knew it was for the best, she began getting on the verge of breaking down again. Still unable to speak, she silently whimpered as her eyes drooped further and her tail wrapped itself around her thigh. Richard sat

down next to her and tenderly held her left paw. "It'll be over soon..." he whispered, "you'll get through this. We will. Together." The pink bunny could feel her fast pulse in his paw and noticed how she was twitching slightly as well. Tears ran down her face again, like many, many times before... Sure, the time she spent in the asylum brought back stress and fear she wasn't used to anymore, but this moment right now absolutely terrified her. Not only was she uncertain if it was gonna work, but she also feared a bad outcome could mean the final breath for both her and Furore. And that's a thought she didn't want to revisit at anytime. She got over fearing her passing a long time ago and felt very collected after having spent time at Aspira, but somehow bad things were always right around the corner for her. How much she could've used Erin's help right now... She shook her head to snap herself out of her thoughts while leaning back and slowly opened her eyes again, a bright full moon immediately lighting up her face as her pupils dilated. Her jaw dropped open as her face turned completely lifeless, with a stare so intensely as a deer in headlights. She froze in her pose, with her head still tilted back, and it wasn't long until her entire system began trembling heavily. Richard was struck by a type of fear he never felt before, but he decided to treat this moment like an Upper Limit incident from before. To both protect his kids and to comfort his wife, he

didn't hesitate when holding onto her tightly, preventing her from potentially breaking loose and harming anybody. She cried in pain as her tearful eyes began turning gray with the same yellow pupils and black irises as the night before. Her clothing tore as it wasn't able to handle her growing and tensed up muscles, and her fur elongated. She was surprised at how much she was still with her own senses, although her pain was too much to prove this. It felt as if the burning of the silver chains was worsening, as they became tighter around her morphing figure. Richard didn't stop holding her for even a second, even when her now wolf-like muzzle scared him. Her overall changing appearance scared him more than the Upper Limit ever could, as this didn't look any bit like her at all anymore. And especially since he began trying to accept Furore as part of her for a lifetime now, it was harder to face a Lycanthrope version of her. But then it struck. The pink bunny only loosened his grip a little bit to notice how Nicole's veins were beginning to color yellow. It looked as if a glowing substance was flowing through them, something both her and him had never seen before. Her trembling became less and she managed to tilt her head to inspect her arms. Surprisingly enough, nothing could be heard from Furore, unlike the night before when she transformed. She assumes it has to do something with it, but couldn't wrap her head

around what... Fortunately, her overall appearance was slowly starting to turn back. The grey fur that did manage to evolve fell off and hit the floor as a little dust pile, revealing her own shorter blue coat underneath again. Her muzzle shrunk as fast as the rest of her figure and she couldn't be any gladder to get her own body back. Her clothing became baggy, along with the chains that loosened and they no longer were burning her skin. She cracked her stiff neck and allowed Richard to help her with standing up. She held up her paws, turned them around and inspected them, followed by her holding one of her arms in the moonlight and seeing the burns disappear. "It... it worked..." she whispered under her breath. The feline then let the loose chains hit the floor and let out a tearful chuckle. Once she turned around, she immediately got hugged tightly by her husband again that felt just as glad as her. "Goshdarnit Nicole, this was terrifying!" he exclaimed while not letting go of her. She sighed in relief and pressed a kiss on his cheek. "It worked, it worked!" she said while wiping away her tears. The pink bunny gently held her head for a second and looked thoroughly into her eyes, glad they were black again. She then turned to the window again once he let go and her tail started waving. "Better clean this mess up," she sighed after a few seconds of silence. Richard smiled and held her paw as he stood next to her, saying "I'll take care of it." She gave him a smile

back and watched how he picked up the large chain from the floor. He wanted to make his way to the shed with it, but the blue feline stopped him before he opened the bedroom door. "Wait, one last thing," she spoke as she put her paws onto the silver, removing them after a few seconds once she was sure it didn't hurt anymore. "Awesome," she said. It was quickly after Richard returned from the garden when the kids came running downstairs. "What was going on?!" exclaimed Gumball as he stopped on one of the last steps. "I heard yelling!" added Darwin as he held Anais' paw. Nicole sighed as she exited the bedroom to face her children. "Long story, sweethearts," she responded, "but truly nothing for you to be worried about. At least not anymore." She smiled in an attempt to reassure them, but they only gave each other confused looks. Anais released Darwin's fin and stepped forward, tilting her head to look her mother in the eye. Her eyes were watery and beaded. "What about Furore," she asked, "is it also okay?" Nicole went silent when she heard her daughter say this and her smile disappeared for a moment. She then gently ruffled the fur on top of the little bunny's head and returned the smile on her face. "I'm sure it is but I'll ask for you, alright?"
"Alright," responded Anais, having a less worried expression on her face now. Nicole then spread out her arms and invited the kids for a hug, which they lovingly embraced despite all

that happened.

'Hey Furore, you good?' is what I would've asked if I was able to communicate with it first. But I know I cannot talk to it if it hasn't spoken first. Kind of an odd system, that mind of mine. But I know it can hear me, and I can still feel its presence. It was probably a lot for it to handle as well, so I remain patient. Which is okay. 'Sleep well, Furore,' is what I'm thinking as loud as I can. I wrote in this diary with the hope you were also able to read it. To reassure you of the fact I haven't forgotten about our healing journey... Today's the day I've battled a case that could've been the start of another series of trouble. I still don't know what happened the night before though, so chances are that I've already caused trouble. It's fine, it's fine. I better focus on the future now. I'm not sure if I'll be needing to spend another while at the hospital, but due to that mistake that has been made I don't feel too comfortable with that idea. But I do miss Lyaa and Shalon though... And Chase, who I even ran into the night before! Heck, the world is a crazy place, perhaps I'll ever run into them again. Who knows... For now I wanna stay in the now and embrace this moment. This moment in which I'm writing in my diary again. Because you never know what's next and it's important to appreciate the moments of rest and joy that are still there. Despite all that darkness, there's a tiny light in me that hasn't gone out. It never did.

End of Lycanidae - a Claws of Rage chronicle.

Hope you enjoyed this 'little' epilogue chronicle! It became a longer story than was planned, but there were just too many ideas I wanted to put in. Thank you all so much for the support and I look forward to writing the next stories!

- Shira - Black Dog Productions

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About the Author

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